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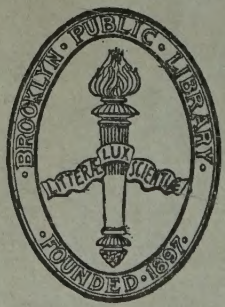

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MEMOIRS OF
MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

This Edition is limited
to seven hundred copies

Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin.

Emery Walker ph.sc.

MEMOIRS OF MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

Written by

WILLIAM GODWIN

And Edited with

A PREFACE

A SUPPLEMENT

Chronologically Arranged and containing hitherto Unpublished or Uncollected Material

and

A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, GLASGOW.

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ADVERTISEMENT

Addressed Principally
To Librarians
And to Those
Concerned with Indexing

I EARNESTLY request all you gentlemen—and ladies, too, if any are present,—in your future dealings with MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT, to allow her books to be indexed under her right name: under the name that appears as the writer in seven of the eleven books that she herself published.

Even the two books that Godwin published after her death are described as concerning 'The Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.' There is no talk of 'Mrs. Godwin.'

In nearly every Library one finds this entry in the Index: 'Wollstonecraft, Mary. See Godwin, Mrs. Mary (Wollstonecraft),' the Index—against its better judgment I am sure—being forced to darken still further the obscurity of her actual name by concealing it between a pair of parenthesis. *Notes and Queries* carried even this harsh principle one step further, by

indexing a letter about this lady under the name of Shelley.'

She bore the name 'Godwin' only from March 29 to September 10, 1797—less than six months, and in view of the brief period of time during which she was so known (as also of the additional circumstance that every single book she published was issued *before* she married Godwin) it is surely ridiculous to describe all of her books as by Mary 'Godwin.'

This practice, which in her case you are now following, is exactly as wrong as if you were to index Katherine Mansfield's books under the name of 'Murry.' It would be difficult to find two lives, in plot and circumstance, more nearly identical than those of this talented pair. Both held unconventional views; both displayed talent at an early age; both wrote and published early books; both were stricken by the hand of death in the very prime of life and genius; and the Posthumous Works of both were collected and published by their respective husbands. Where then is the justice, I ask, of indexing the books of one under her husband's name, and those of the other under her own?

I suppose all of you are informed how seldom Mary's books are consulted or taken from your Libraries—yet I am willing to wager that even under the handicap which now obstructs them, they have a wider circulation than do those of him under whose name they are now indexed.

ADVERTISEMENT

Give this lady's brilliant genius a possible chance to arise from those dark troubled waters of the River Lethe in which it has been for so long undeservedly submerged. Remove that false label !—and then you may observe if the name MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT be not once more spoken in the same tone of loving admiration that was used by her friends of that period and even by those of a later generation.

LIFE AND TIMES OF MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT: 1750-1803[1]

A.D.	AET.	
1750	—	Born: John Philpot Curran; Gustav, Graf von Schlabrendorf.
1751	—	Born: Archibald Hamilton Rowan.
1752	—	Born: John Bonnycastle (January); Fanny Burney; Thomas Chatterton.
1753	—	Born: Thomas Bewick; Elizabeth Inchbald (*née* Simpson).
1754	—	Born: Joel Barlow; J. P. Brissot (de Warville); Gilbert Imlay; Louis XVI.; T. J. Mathias; Mme. Roland (*née* Manon Jeanne Phlipon); Caspar Johann Schweizer; Talleyrand.
1755	—	Born: Marie Antoinette; Sarah Siddons (*née* Kemble).
1756	—	The great tragedy at Calcutta: 146 Englishmen imprisoned in the 'Black Hole Prison,' a dungeon of 18 ft. in cubic space. Only 23 survived the night.
1757	—	Born: William Blake; John Philip Kemble.
1758	—	Born: Lord Nelson; Robespierre; Mary Robinson ('Perdita,' *née* Derby). Walpole's *Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors.*
1759		Born: Mary Wollstonecraft (April 27, 'at a farm in Epping Forest'); Robert Burns; Thomas Cooper of Manchester. Died: W. Collins.

[1] With the kind permission of Mr. Humphrey Milford of the Oxford University Press, I am using the same form he used in his splendid Oxford edition of *The Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt*, London.

A.D.	AET.	
1760	1	[Born : George Anderson ; William Beckford ; William Pitt. [Died : George II. [Macpherson's *Ossian* ; Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse.*
1761	2	[Marriage and Coronation of George III. [Born : Thomas Christie. Died : Samuel Richardson.
1762	3	[Born : Cobbett ; George IV. [Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World* ; Rousseau's *Contrat Social* and *Emile* ; Smollett's *Sir Launcelot Greaves* ; Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting in England.*
1763	4	[Wilkes prosecuted. Meeting of Johnson and Boswell. Fuseli arrives in England and meets Joseph Johnson, bookseller. [Born : Frederick Augustus, Duke of York ; Samuel Rogers. [Hoole's *Tasso* ; Smart's *A Song to David.*
1764	5	Wollstonecrafts remove to 'a farm on the Whalebone—a little way out of the Chelmsford road.' [Born : Ann Radcliffe (*née* Ward). Died : W. Hogarth. [Gibbon begins his *History* ; Goldsmith's *Traveller* ; Walpole's *Castle of Otranto.*
1765	6	Wollstonecrafts again remove (Michaelmas) 'to the town of Barking in Essex,' and become friends with the Gascoyne family. [Stamp Act passed. [Died : Edward Young (*Night Thoughts*). [Johnson's *Shakespeare* ; Percy's *Reliques.*
1766	7	[Stamp Act repealed. Rousseau in England (1766, 1767). Burke enters Parliament. [Born : Isaac Disraeli ; T. R. Malthus. [Amory's *John Buncle* ; Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* ; Smollett's *Travels through France and Italy.*
1767	8	[Born : Maria Edgeworth.
1768	9	Born : James Wollstonecraft (bapt. February 23 'at the Parish church of St. Margarett's, Barking'). [Born : Sir Anthony Carlisle ; Queen Caroline.

A.D.	AET.	
		[Boswell's *Account of Corsica*; Goldsmith's *Good-Natured Man*; Walpole's *Historic Doubts on Richard III.* and *Mysterious Mother.*
		'In Michaelmas . . . Mr. Wollstonecraft again removed to a farm near Beverley in Yorkshire.'
1769	10	[Born: Castlereagh; Sir Hudson Lowe; Napoleon; Wellington.
		[Burke's *Present State of the Nation*; *Letters of Junius* begin.
1770	11	[Born: Sir F. Burdett; Canning; Basil Montagu; Wordsworth. Died: Akenside; Chatterton; Smart.
		[Burke's *Present Discontents*; Goldsmith's *Deserted Village.*
1771	12	[Born: James Montgomery; Robert Owen; Walter Scott; Sydney Smith. Died: T. Gray; Smollett.
		[Beattie's *Minstrel*; Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*; Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker.*
1772	13	[Royal Marriage Bill passed. Born: S. T. Coleridge.
1773	14	[Born: Francis Jeffrey; James Mill.
		[Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*; Hoole's *Ariosto.*
1774	15	In September Mr. Wollstonecraft removed 'to a house in Queen's Row, in Hoxton, near London. . . . Here he remained for a year and a half.' In 1773 Godwin had entered Hoxton College as a student, and remained there five years.
		[Burke's speech on American taxation.
		[Born: Southey. Died: Goldsmith; Louis XV.
		[Goethe's *Sorrows of Werther*; Goldsmith's *Retaliation*; Johnson's *Patriot.*
1775	16	Mary meets Fanny Blood.
		[American War of Independence.
		[Born: Jane Austen; Lamb; Landor; M. G. ('Monk') Lewis; Crabb Robinson; James Smith.
		[Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* and *Taxation no Tyranny*; Sheridan's *Rivals.*

A.D.	AET.	
1776	17	'In the spring . . . Mr. Wollstonecraft quitted his situation at Hoxton, and returned to his former agricultural pursuits. The situation upon which he now fixed was in Wales.' [Born: William Blackwood; Jane Porter. Died: Hume. [Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, i. (other vols. 1781, 1788); Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.
1777	18	'Wales however was Mr. Wollstonecraft's residence for little more than a year. He returned to the neighbourhood of London . . . the village of Walworth.' Say in April. [Born: Thomas Campbell. [Chatterton's *Rowley Poems*; Sheridan's *School for Scandal*; T. Warton's *Poems*.
1778	19	Mary goes as companion to Mrs. Dawson of Bath; remains two years. [Horne Tooke imprisoned. [Born: Brougham; Hazlitt; John Murray. Died: Lord Chatham; Rousseau. [Fanny Burney's *Evelina*.
1779	20	[Born: Galt; T. Moore; Horace Smith. Died: Garrick. [Cowper's *Olney Hymns*; Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, vols. i-iv (v-x, 1781); Sheridan's *The Critic*.
1780	21	Wollstonecraft family now living at Enfield. Mary returns on account of her mother's rapidly declining health. Mrs. Elizabeth Wollstonecraft dies. James goes to sea. Mary goes with Fanny to Walham Green, near Fulham. [The Gordon Riots. [Crabbe's *Candidate*; Holcroft's *Alwyn, or the Gentleman Comedian*.
1781	22	[Capitulation of Cornwallis. [Born: Ebenezer Elliot; John Knowles; Vincent Novello. [Robert Bage's *Mount Henneth*; Cowper's *Anti-Thelyphthora*; Crabbe's *Library*; Hayley's *Triumphs of Temper*; Holcroft's *Duplicity*.
1782	23	Mary nurses and attends her sister Eliza, whom she has persuaded to leave her husband, the brutal Mr. Bishop. Eliza half distracted.

A.D. AET.

[Lamb goes to Christ's Hospital. Mrs. Siddons's *début* at Drury Lane.

[Fanny Burney's *Cecilia*; Cowper's *Poems* and 'John Gilpin'; M. G. St. Jean de Crevecoeur's *Lettres d'un Cultivateur americain*; translated as *Letters from an American Farmer*; Rousseau's *Confessions*.

1783 24 Mary and Fanny start their school: first at Islington, soon remove to Newington Green. Here Mary meets Dr. Price, Mrs. Burgh, Rev. John Hewlett and Dr. Johnson.

[Born: Washington Irving.

[Blake's *Poetical Sketches*; Crabbe's *Village*; Day's *Sandford* and *Merton*, i (ii, 1787; iii, 1789).

[Kemble's *début* in London.

1784 25 [Born: Allan Cunningham; Leigh Hunt; J. Sheridan Knowles; Lord Palmerston. Died: Dr. Johnson.

[Bage's *Barham Downs*; Beaumarchais's *Mariage de Figaro*; Beckford's *Vathek* (English translation); Holcroft's *Noble Peasant*.

1785 26 Fanny Blood marries Hugh Skeys (Feb. 24) and sails with him to Lisbon. Later she implores Mary to be with her in her confinement, and Mary goes. Fanny and child die together (Nov. 29); Mary sails for home 'about the 20th of December.'

[Prince of Wales secretly marries Mrs. Fitzherbert.

[Born: De Quincey; Thomas Love Peacock; John Wilson ('Christopher North').

[Boswell's *Tour to the Hebrides*; Cowper's *Task*; *The Florence Miscellany* (organ of the Della Cruscans); Hayley's *Philosophical, Historical, and Moral Essay on Old Maids*, by a Friend to the Sisterhood; Holcroft's *Follies of the Day* (from *Figaro*).

1786 27 Mary arrives London (January); closes school; spends the summer with the Priors at Eton; crosses with them to Ireland (end of September); arrives Mitchelstown, co. Cork (October), governess to the daughters of Lady Kingsborough; 'In the winter the Kingsborough family went to Dublin.'

A.D. AET.

[Boydell begins his Shakespeare plan.

[Born: Charles Armitage Brown; Barron Field; W. J. Fox; Haydon.

[Burns's *Poems*; Holcroft's trans. *Caroline of Lichfield, A Novel*; Mrs. Piozzi's *Anecdotes of Johnson*; Horne Tooke's *Diversions of Purley*, i (ii, 1805).

1787 28 *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters.*

In the summer Mary accompanies the Kingsboroughs to Bristol Hot-wells; writes *Mary* there; parts with Lady K.; arrives London in August; resides with Johnson two or three weeks; visits friends at Henley and Market Harborough same length of time; 'at Michaelmas . . . she entered upon a house in George street, on the Surrey side of Black Friar's Bridge.'

[Impeachment of Warren Hastings.

[Born: C. Cowden Clarke; Edmund Kean; Miss Mitford; Bryan Waller Procter ('Barry Cornwall').

[Bage's *Fair Syrian*; Beckford's *Vathek* (French original); Holcroft's *Seduction, A Comedy.*

1788 29 *Original Stories from Real Life.*

Mary, A Fiction.

Translation of Necker: *On the Importance of Religious Opinions.*

Probably in this year Mary first met Fuseli.

[Born: *The Analytical Review* (May); Barham; Byron; Theodore Hook; Charles Ollier; Sir R. Peel; Southwood Smith. Died: Charles Wesley.

[Brissot in America.

[Fuseli marries Sophia Rawlins (June 30).

[Bage's *James Wallace*; Gibbon completes *Decline and Fall*; Holcroft's trans. *Life of Baron Trenck.*

1789 30 *The Female Reader.*

[Born: Lady Blessington.

[Affairs in France; States General open, May 5; National Assembly organized, June; Bastille falls, July 14; Queen's apartment at Versailles stormed, October 6; Louis,

A.D. AET.

Marie Antoinette and children go to Paris, kept under surveillance at the Tuileries.

[Dr. Price's ' Discourse ' at the Old Jewry, Nov. 4.

[Bentham's *Principles of Morals* ; Blake's *Songs of Innocence* ; Bowles's *Sonnets* ; *British Album* (Della Crusca) ; Erasmus Darwin's *Loves of the Plants* ; Holcroft's trans. Lavater's *Physiognomy* ; Dr. Price's *Discourse on the Love of our Country*.

1790 31 *Young Grandison.*
Elements of Morality.
A Vindication of the Rights of Men. Two editions.

[H. J. Pye succeeds T. Warton as Poet Laureate.

[Died : Benjamin Franklin ; Adam Smith ; T. Warton.

[Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* ; Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* ; Goethe's *Faust* (fragment) ; Holcroft's *German Hotel.*

1791 32 ' In September . . . she removed from the house she occupied in George-street, to a large and commodious apartment in Store-street, Bedford-square.' In this year she first meets Godwin, who records it : Nov. 13. ' Dine at Johnson's with Paine, Shovet, and Wolstencraft.'

[Affairs in France : Louis escapes from the Tuileries, June 20 ; captured at Varennes and taken back to Paris. National Assembly dissolves, Sept. 30 ; succeeded by Legislative Assembly, Oct. 1.

[Born : Charles Knight. Died : Mirabeau ; Richard Price ; John Wesley.

[Boswell's *Life of Johnson* ; Brissot's *Nouveau Voyage dans les Etats-Unis de l'Amerique Septentrionale* ; Cowper's *Homer* ; Holcroft's *School for Arrogance* ; Mrs. Inchbald's *Simple Story* ; I. d'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature* ; Paine's *Rights of Men* (1st part).

1792 33 *A Vindication of the Rights of Women.*
Mary meets and entertains Talleyrand, during his London visit, January to March. She pays Charles's passage to America, for which

A.D. AET.

country he sails at the end of the year. On December 8 Mary departs for Paris, where she resides at first in the house of Mme. Fillietaz.

[Affairs in France: armed populace invade hall of the Assembly and the Royal apartment in the Tuileries, June 20. Louis's Swiss guard massacred, August 10. Revolutionary Commune now in power; Assembly has withered.

[Born: George Cruikshank; Thomas Jefferson Hogg; W. Howitt; Edward Irving; John Keble; Shelley; Trelawny.

[Bage's *Man as he is*; Joel Barlow's *Letter to the National Convention of France* and *Advice to the Privileged Orders* (both published by J. Johnson); Brissot's *New Travels in the United States of America, performed in* 1788 *by J. P. Brissot de Warville* (trans. by Barlow); Holcroft's *Road to Ruin* and *Anna St. Ives*; Imlay's *Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America*; Paine's *Rights of Men* (2nd part); Rogers's *Pleasures of Memory*.

1793 34 In March or April Mary meets Imlay at the house of Mr. Christie. Soon after she takes 'a lodging at Neuilly, a village three miles from Paris.' Imlay goes to Havre in September, leaving Mary in Paris.

[Revolutionary matters: Reign of Terror in France. Louis beheaded, January 21; Marie Antoinette, October 16. Brissot, with 21 Girondins, goes to the guillotine October 31. Mme. Roland is executed November 8; her husband on learning of the event falls on his own sword November 10. Count Schlabrendorf imprisoned in January; Paine imprisoned from October 27, 1793, to October 30, 1794.

[Born: John Clare; Mrs. Hemans; Macready; Joseph Severn.

[Blake's *Vision of the Daughters of Albion* and *America: a Prophecy*; Burns's *Tam o' Shanter*, etc.; Godwin's *Political Justice*; Mary Hays' *Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous*; Imlay's *Emigrants, or, The History of an expatriated Family*; Wordsworth's *Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*.

A.D. AET.

1794 35 *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution.*

Mary goes to Havre in January, where Imlay has been living since last September. Fanny Imlay born, May 14 (*d.* October 11, 1816). In September Imlay goes to London; Mary, soon after his departure, returns to Paris. Rowan is in Paris from June 1794 to April 1795.

[Last reports from France: Robespierre made president of the Convention, June 4; guillotined July 26; with his death Reign of Terror practically over.

[Holcroft and Horne Tooke tried for high treason: acquitted.

[Born: J. G. Lockhart. Died: Gibbon.

[Barlow's *Conspiracy of Kings: A Poem*; Blake's *Songs of Experience*; Blake's *Europe*; *a Prophecy* and *The* [*First*] *Book of Urizen*; Coleridge and Southey's *Fall of Robespierre*; Erasmus Darwin's *Botanic Garden*; Gifford's *Baviad*; Godwin's *Caleb Williams*; Holcroft's *Love's Frailties* and *Adventures of Hugh Trevor*; T. J. Mathias's *Pursuits of Literature*; Paine's *Age of Reason*; Mrs. Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*; Southey's *Poems* (with Robert Lovell).

1795 36 In April, Mary, at Imlay's request, goes to England; leaving her house in Havre only a few days before Rowan takes shelter there while waiting for a vessel to carry him to Philadelphia. She finds Imlay living with an 'actress from a strolling company of players.' She lives 'for about seven weeks, from the 16th April to the 6th June, in a furnished house that Mr. Imlay had provided for her.' She makes an attempt at suicide, but it was 'perhaps owing to his activity and representations, that her life was, at this time, saved.' Imlay engages her as his attorney to straighten out his tangled business affairs in Scandinavia. About the 27th of May (as Kegan Paul dates, in brackets, one of her letters) she is in Hull, waiting for the vessel which will take her to Sweden. Adverse winds delay their start until June 21. She travels through Sweden,

A.D. AET.

Norway and Denmark, most of the way accompanied by Fanny and her nurse (a Frenchwoman), finishing the journey at Copenhagen, Hamburg and Altona, where she arrived September 25. On October 4, she had arrived at Dover, and when she reached London she found Imlay had a new mistress. A few days later she again attempted suicide: this time throwing herself from Putney Bridge into the Thames, but was saved. For a while she lives with Mrs. Christie in Finsbury-square. In November, Imlay and his new paramour go to Paris for three months. Mary takes a 'lodging in Finsbury-place, where, for some time, she saw scarcely any one but Mrs. Christie.'

[Warren Hastings acquitted. Prince of Wales marries Caroline of Brunswick.

[Born: Thomas Arnold; Carlyle; Darley; Keats; Talfourd.

[Died: Boswell.

[Burger's *Lenore* (trans. H. J. Pye, P.L.; Blake's designs for this, 1796); Gifford's *Maeviad*; Holcroft's *Narrative of Facts, Letter to the Rt. Hon. Wm. Windham* and *Deserted Daughter*; Landor's *Poems*.

1796 37 *Letters written during a short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark.*

In January she finished a comedy, which Godwin two years later destroyed. In the same month her acquaintance with Godwin is renewed. She sees Imlay on his return in February, and spends the month of March with friends in Berkshire. 'Once after this . . . she saw Mr. Imlay . . . by accident upon the New Road; he alighted from his horse and walked with her for some time; and the rencounter passed.' On April 14 she called upon Godwin in Somers Town, 'she having, since her return [from Berkshire], taken a lodging in Cumming-street, Pentonville, at no great distance from' Godwin's habitation.'

[Born: Princess Charlotte; Hartley Coleridge; J. Hamilton Reynolds. Died: George Anderson; Burns; Thomas Christie.

[Mme. d'Arblay's *Camilla*; Bage's *Herm-*

A.D. AET.

sprong : or Man as he is not; Coleridge's *Poems*; Miss Edgeworth's *Parent's Assistant*; Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*; Holcroft's *Man of Ten Thousand* and trans. of Stolberg's *Travels*; Mrs. Inchbald's *Nature and Art*; Southey's *Joan of Arc*; Lt.-Col. Stedman's *Narrative of an Expedition against the revolted Negroes in the Colony of Surinam*, published by J. Johnson, with several plates engraved by Blake after Stedman, and the names of Blake and Holcroft in the list of subscribers; James White's *Falstaff's Letters*.

1797 38 The marriage of Mary and Godwin took place at Old St. Pancras Church, March 29, and was announced at 'the commencement of April.' Mary was delivered of a daughter, August 30, and died September 10. She was buried in St. Pancras Church-yard on the 15th.

[Died: Burke; Horace Walpole; John Wilkes.

[*Anti-Jacobin* (edited by W. Gifford); Coleridge's, Lamb's and Lloyd's *Poems*; Godwin's *Enquirer*; Dr. Moore's *Edward*; Mrs. Radcliffe's *The Italian*; Southey's *Poems*.

1798 — *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Women.*

Posthumous Works of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Women.

[The Battle of the Nile. Irish Rebellion.

[Coleridge and Hazlitt meet. Coleridge and Wordsworth go to Germany.

[Joanna Baillie's *Plays on the Passions* (1798, 1802, 1812); Coleridge and Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*; Holcroft's *Knave or not? He's much to blame*, and *Inquisitor*; Landor's *Gebir*; Malthus's *On Population*.

1799 — [Born: T. Hood; Mary Howitt; Mrs. Procter (*née* Skepper).

[Died: *The Analytical Review* (June); George Washington.

[Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope*; Godwin's *St. Leon*: Mary Hays's *Victim of Prejudice*; Anna Seward's *Sonnets*.

A.D.	AET.	
1800	—	[Union of England and Ireland. [Born: Macaulay; Pusey; Sir Henry Taylor; Charles Wells. [Died: Cowper; Mary Robinson. [Bloomfield's *Farmer's Boy*; Coleridge and Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*, 2nd edition; *Christabel*, Part II written; Miss Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*; Gifford's *Epistle to Peter Pindar*; Moore's *Anacreon*; Schiller's *Wallenstein* (and Coleridge's translation).
1801	—	*English Exercises*. By Jane Gardiner. (11 letters by Mary.) [Battles of the Baltic and Copenhagen. [Born: J. H. Newman; Lord Shaftesbury. Died: Robert Bage; Lavater. [Holcroft's *Deaf and Dumb*, and trans. *Herman and Dorothea*; Moore's *Poems of Thomas Little*; Southey's *Thalaba*.
1802	—	[Peace of Amiens. [Born: Letitia E. Landon ('L.E.L.'); Harriet Martineau. [Died: Erasmus Darwin; George Fordyce. [Cobbett's *Political Register*, i; *Edinburgh Review*, i; Gifford's *Juvenal*; Holcroft's *Tale of Mystery*; Landor's *Poetry*; Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*; Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* (abridgement).
1803	—	[War with France renewed. [Born: Thomas Lovell Beddoes; Emerson; R. H. Horne; Douglas Jerrold; Bulwer Lytton. [Died: Alfieri; Beattie. [*A Defence of the Character and Conduct of the late Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin* (anonymous); Coleridge's *Poems*; Hayley's *Life of Cowper*; Mary Hays's *Female Biography, or Memoirs of Illustrious and Celebrated Women of all Ages and Countries*. (Not a mention of her friend, Mary Wollstonecraft, although she includes Sappho, Charlotte Corday, Mrs. Chapone, Ninon de l'Enclos, of whom she relates many amours; Mrs. Macaulay; and allots over 200 pp. to Mary's friend, Mme. Roland.)

PREFACE TO MEMOIRS

She creates at her will a little moony night and a silence
With spaces of sweet gardens and a tent of elegant beauty:
Closed in by a sandy desart and a night of stars shining,
And a little tender moon and hovering angels on the wing.

WILLIAM BLAKE.

WILLIAM GODWIN (1756-1836), philosopher and novelist, came into contemporary prominence by what was practically his first published work: *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness.*[1]

Kegan Paul, Godwin's biographer, says of the book:

> The publication of *Political Justice* marked an epoch in English thought. It was coincident with the rise of a school of philosophical radicals, and in large measure placed in clear words the views of that school, on many, though perhaps not all, of the subjects treated.

In the following year Godwin gained another wide popularity, though of a different kind. In 1794 was published a novel in three volumes—*Things as They are: Or Caleb*

[1] Two volumes, 1793.

Williams—a book highly praised by contemporary critics, as well as, later, by Hazlitt and Scott. It went through many subsequent editions, under the title *Caleb Williams*.

But of all Godwin's books the two which possess the best chance of survival are, perhaps, the pleasant little volume entitled *Essay on Sepulchres* [2] and *Memoirs of the author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

William Bates, in *The Maclise Portrait Gallery*, remarks of the former :

> A charming little book of Godwin's is his *Essay on Sepulchres*. This was the favourite of Charles Lamb, who affronted the author by telling him that it was ' better than Hervey but inferior to Sir Thomas Browne.' Lamb calls it ' a pretty absurd book ' ; and Talfourd says of the book that it is ' quite chimerical in itself, but accompanied with solemn and touching musings on life and death, and fame, embodied in a style of singular refinement and beauty.'

This essay Mary Godwin would take with her in 1814 to read beside her mother's grave in St. Pancras Churchyard.

But more abiding even than his *Essay on Sepulchres* will be the Memoir of that earlier Mary, to whose sweet reputation this present volume is wholly dedicated. The book is

[2] Essay / on / Sepulchres ; / Or, / A Proposal for erecting some Memorial of the Illustrious / Dead in all Ages on the Spot / Where their Remains have / been Interred. / By William Godwin. / Not one of these shall perish. / The Bible. / London : / Printed for W. Miller, Albemarle Street. / 1809.

written in Godwin's best and most delightful style—frank, candid and simple; more importantly, it concerns a noble and lovely woman, and in its pages her personality blossoms afresh.

Mary Wollstonecraft—heroine of this book and herself the writer of an important part of it—possessed, together with her brilliant intellect, great personal charm. I like to think that the lovely lines of Blake's quoted at the beginning of this Preface were written about her.

Let us allow a few contemporary, and some later friends, to express their views of her.

Count von Schlabrendorf, whom she visited and comforted while he was in a Paris prison in 1793, was the most enthusiastic of all Mary's admirers, and his testimony deserves first place:

> Mary was the noblest, purest and most intelligent woman I have ever met. I knew her well . . . Mary was . . . of a charming grace. Her face, so full of expression, presented a style of beauty beyond that of merely regular features. There was enchantment in her glance, her voice, and her movement. . . . She enthralled me more and more. Not until after she had left Paris, did I realise that I loved her.

Next speaks that pretty, impulsive Amelia Alderson, who, after having avoided the advances of William Godwin was to become the wife of John Opie. She first met Mary

(at that time still known to her friends as Mrs. Imlay) in the spring of 1796, and wrote to her that the first sight of all long expected and desired things had always proved to be disappointing—' except those of Mrs. Imlay and the Cumberland Lakes ! '

Mrs. Siddons, about the same time, after reading Mary's recently published *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, etc.*, wrote to her then friend Godwin that the book was read by no one in possession of ' more reciprocity of feeling, or more deeply impressed by the author's extraordinary powers.'

The next year, in the month that Mary passed on to happier spheres, *The Monthly Magazine* printed this notice by her faithful friend and companion—Mary Hays :

> This extraordinary woman, no less distinguished by admirable talents and a masculine understanding than by active humanity, exquisite sensibility, and endearing qualities of heart, commanding the respect and winning the affections of all who were favoured with her friendship and confidence, or who were within the sphere of her influence, may justly be considered as a public loss. . . A wife, a mother, surrounded by tender, admiring, intelligent friends, her heart expanded, her powers acquired new vigour, life brightened, and futurity opened a prospect beaming with hope and promise. At this interesting period, a fatal coincidence of events blasted every fair and fond expectation ; and death, attended with more than its accustomed pangs and terrors, tore from the hapless offspring,

the tender husband, the numerous and zealous friends, from society, and from the world, the mother, wife, beloved companion, the ornament of her sex, the enlightened advocate of freedom, and the benevolent friend of human kind.

> 'Not friends alone such obsequies deplore,
> They make mankind the mourners, carry sighs
> Far as the fatal fame can make its way.'

Mary Hays did not like the printing of this eulogy without her signature affixed, and wrote this letter to the magazine, which was printed in the October number (4 : 245) :

To the Editor of the *Monthly Magazine.*

Sir,

To the paragraph in your Magazine for September, announcing the decease of Mrs. Godwin, it was my desire and intention to have affixed my name, as a public testimony of respect and affection for my late admirable friend. But by some misconception this intention appears to have been defeated. Farther particulars respecting this extraordinary woman, I did not think myself at liberty to add, as they will probably, within a short period, be given to the public by a far abler hand.

To have been ranked among the number of her distinguished friends, to have awakened kindness in a heart exquisitely capable of every affectionate sympathy, to have had an opportunity of pouring the balm of tenderness into that heart, when lacerated by a sense of undeserved injury and calumny, are among the circumstances of my life, which I shall ever remember with equal pride and pleasure.

Oct. 10, 1797. Mary Hays.

In October *The Gentleman's Magazine* printed the only kind words that Tory paper ever said about her. It called her :

> a woman of uncommon talents and considerable knowledge : well known throughout Europe by her literary works. . . . Her manners were gentle, easy, and elegant, her conversation intelligent and amusing, without the least trace of literary pride or the apparent consciousness of powers above the level of her sex ; and for soundness of understanding, and sensibility of heart, she was, perhaps, rarely equalled. Her practical skill in education was even superior to her speculations upon that subject ; nor is it possible to express the misfortune sustained, in that respect, by her children.

In this year two poems about her by Southey were published. The first occurs in some lines from his metrical Introduction to his friend Joseph Cottle's *Icelandic Poetry, or The Edda of Saemund.* Southey's part of the book is dated 'Bristol, November 1, 1797.'

> Amid such scenes as these, the Poet's soul
> Might best attain full growth ; pine cover'd rocks,
> And mountain forests of eternal shade,
> And glens and vales on whose green quietness
> The lingering eye reposes, and fair lakes
> That image the light foliage of the beech,
> Or the grey glitter of the aspen leaves
> On the still bough still trembling. Scenes like these
> Have almost lived before me, when I gazed
> Upon their faint remembrance traced by him [3]
> Who sung the banished man of Ardebeil,

[3] Charles Fox, author of *Some Views in Norway.*

Or to the eye of Fancy held by her,[4]
Who among women left no equal mind
When from this world she passed ; and I could weep,
To think that *She* is to the grave gone down !

The other is from Southey's *Poems*, and appears as a Dedication to his poem entitled *The Triumph of Woman*. It was written in 1795.

To Mary Wollstonecraft.

The lily cheek, the ' purple light of love,'
The liquid lustre of the melting eye,—
Mary ! of these the Poet sung, for these
Did Woman triumph : turn not thou away
Contemptuous of the theme. No Maid of Arc
Had in those ages for her country's cause
Wielded the sword of freedom ; no Roland
Had borne the palm of female fortitude ;
No Cordé, with self-sacrificing zeal,
Had glorified again the Avenger's name,
As erst when Caesar perished, haply too,
Some strains may hence be drawn, befitting me
To offer, nor unworthy thy regard.

In 1799 Godwin drew her portrait in the character of Marguerite Louise Isabeau de Damville in his novel *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* :

I cannot even now recollect her without tears .... That incomparable woman the first time I saw her made a deep impression on me. . . . The purity of her mind seemed to give a celestial brilliancy and softness to her person. . . . Her complexion was of the most perfect transparency, her eyes sparkling and her eyebrows long. Such was the perfect

[4] Mary Wollstonecraft,

smoothness and clearness of her skin that she appeared five years younger than she was, and she long retained this extreme juvenility of form. Her step was airy and light as that of a young faun, yet at the same time firm, and indicative of strength of body and vigour of mind. . . .

She is a treasure, the equal of which, perhaps, the world does not hold. . . . In understanding, accomplishments, and virtue I firmly believe no woman living can compare with her. . . . She has all the simplicity of genuine taste. The more she delivered herself up to nature, the greater was her content. All superfluous appendages and show appeared to her as so many obstacles to enjoyment. She derived her happiness from the tone of her own mind, and stood in no need of the gaping admiration and stupid wonder of others to make herself happy. . . .

Marguerite seemed to shed ambrosial odours round her ; her touch was thrilling ; her figure was that of a descended deity. . . . Amidst the singular assemblage of her intellectual accomplishments, there was nothing by which she was so much distinguished as the uncommon prudence of her judgment, and the unalterable amiability of her manners. . . .

Her defects, if defects she had, drew their pedigree from rectitude of sentiment and perception, from the most generous sensibility, from a heart pervaded and leavened with tenderness.

William Blake must have been one of Mary's friends, as there is no doubt that they met frequently at Johnson's, and he made engravings for two of Mary's books—*Original Stories from Real Life*, and *Elements of Morality*.

I believe that Blake's poem *Mary*, in the Pickering MS., is based on the character and

life of our own Mary. S. Foster Damon, in his recently published *William Blake, His Philosophy and Symbols*,[5] is of the same opinion. Dr. Sampson, another authority on Blake, from internal evidence says *Mary* ' was certainly written before August 16, 1803.'

The first three verses are all that belong here:

Sweet Mary, the first time she ever was there,
Came into the ball-room among the fair;
The young men and maidens around her throng,
And these are the words upon every tongue:

'An angel is here from the heavenly climes,
Or again does return the golden climes;
Her eyes outshone every brilliant ray,
She opens her lips—'tis the month of May.'

Mary moves in sweet beauty and conscious delight,
To augment with sweet smiles all the joys of the night,
Nor once blushes to own to the rest of the fair
That sweet Love and Beauty are worthy our care.

The testimony, so far, has come from Mary's friends—from people who knew and loved her. The ones that follow (with the exception of the first) are from those born too late to have known her, but all possessing the same affection for her.

The first is from *A Defence of the Character and Conduct of the late Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin* (1803). The anonymous author of this book was evidently not even an acquaint-

[5] *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols.* London: Constable & Co. Ltd. 1924.

ance, but gathered all his material from Mary's books and Godwin's *Memoirs*. Kegan Paul says this ' " Defence " is mingled with a good deal of venom.' But, indeed, there is no venom in it. The writer really means to defend her, and he does. This is one of the many pleasant things he says about her :

> The leading traits in the character of Mary Wollstonecraft were activity, taste, sensibility, and a peculiar quickness of perception : her heart beat high with sentiments of generosity and a most comprehensive benevolence : her affections glowed with singular ardour towards all who became interested in her heart : and so great was her respect for the dictates of virtue and for what she believed to be the line of her moral duties, that no consideration of worldly applause could induce her to prevaricate, or to swerve in the least degree from the direct principles, which she had assumed as the regulators of her general conduct. The decisiveness of her judgment rendered her superior to evasions or deception : semblances and assumed characters, that have no natural foundation in the principles of her mind, were far remote from her ; because it was her particular desire to appear in her true and genuine colours to the world.

Shelley, in his Dedication to Mary, his wife, of *The Revolt of Islam* (1817), had this to say of her mother :

> They say that thou were lovely from thy birth,
> Of glorious parents, thou aspiring child ;
> I wonder not—for one then left this earth
> Whose life was like a setting planet mild,
> Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled

Of its departing glory ; still her fame
Shines on thee, through the tempests dark and wild
Which shake these latter days ; and thou canst
claim
The shelter, from thy Sire, of an immortal name.

Her daughter, Mary Shelley, wrote of her that she was

> one of those beings who appear . . . to gild humanity with a ray which no difference of opinion nor chance of circumstances can cloud. Her genius was undeniable. . . . Her sound understanding, her intrepidity, her sensibility and eager sympathy, stamped all her writings with force and truth, and endowed them with a tender charm which enchants while it enlightens. She was one whom all loved who had ever seen her. Many years have passed since that beating heart has been laid in the . . . grave, but no one who has ever seen her speaks of her without enthusiastic veneration.

And then an extract from an unsigned, undated, 18 pp. pamphlet in the New York Public Library, entitled *Memoirs of William Godwin.* Since the bibliography of Godwin's books therein contained includes *Cloudesley* (1830), Godwin's penultimate novel, but does not include *Thoughts on Man* (1831) or *Deloraine* (1833), I believe the pamphlet may be assigned to the year 1830 :

> The writings of this celebrated woman are monuments to her moral and intellectual superiority. Her lofty spirit, her eager assertion of the claim of her sex, animate the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* ; while the sweetness and taste displayed in her *Letters from Norway* depict the

softer qualities of her admirable character. Even now, those who have survived her so many years never speak of her but with uncontrollable enthusiasm. Her unwearied exertions for the benefit of others, her rectitude, her independence, joined to a warm, affectionate heart, and the most refined softness of manners, made her the idol of all who knew her.

Kegan Paul, in the ' Prefatory Memoir ' to his edition of *Letters to Imlay* (1879) makes the following agreeable comment :

Like her mind . . . her beauty would appear to have ripened late. In July 1792, Mrs. Bishop says in a letter to Everina that ' Charles informs me too that Mrs. Wollstonecraft is grown quite handsome.' The grudging admission is more than confirmed by her portrait by Opie . . . which was painted for Godwin during the brief period of her marriage ; long therefore after she had reached mature age, and when all the waves and storms of her sorrows had gone over her. More than one print was engraved of that portrait, in which is well preserved its tender, wistful, childlike, pathetic beauty, with a look of pleading against the hardness of the world, which I know in one only other face, that of Beatrice Cenci. But these prints can give no notion of the complexion, rich, full, healthy, vivid, of the clear brown eyes, and masses of brownish auburn hair.

One final reference is from Allene Gregory's *The French Revolution and the English Novel* (1915) :

Mary Wollstonecraft lives ! One has an odd feeling of having known and talked with her somewhere—the girl of Opie's portraits, with her sweet

wistful face under the soft waves of dark auburn hair, the expressive brown eyes that Southey praised so, the sensitive, almost childlike mouth. . . . Paine, Horne Tooke, Fordyce, Godwin, Fuseli, Holcroft, and all their brilliant circle welcomed her as an equal.

To the opinions expressed by Mary's friends on her keen intellect and her great personal charm, may be added one more. Mysticism has never before been attributed to her (save by one hostile commentator) and yet there can be no shadow of doubt that it was one of her most pronounced qualities. Evidence of it appears in her writings all through her life.

The only person who had hitherto noticed this quality in Mary was the malignant Mrs. Jane West (1758-1852), who published many books, among which was one entitled *Letters Addressed to a Young Man on His First Entrance into Life*.[6] In this work, which contains many venomous comments on Mary, Mrs. West chances, in one milder passage, to classify her ' among mystical and enthusiastic persons.'

Even as a child ' sublime ideas filled her young mind ' ; she would sit and talk with angels who ' sometimes visited this earth,' and ' make little songs addressed to them, and sing them to tunes of her own composing.' ' The wandering spirits which inhabited every part of nature were her constant friends and

[6] Three volumes. London: Printed for A. Strahan. 1801.

confidants.' She at this time 'formed just notions' of the attributes of 'the Great First Cause,' and 'dwelt on his wisdom and goodness.'

In her *Cave of Fancy*, called by Godwin 'a sort of oriental tale,' which she composed soon after her arrival in London in 1787, at the age of twenty-eight, she writes:

> The sun was fled, what was this world to me! I wandered to another, where death and darkness could not enter; I pursued the sun beyond the mountains, and the soul escaped from this vale of tears. My reflections were tinged with melancholy, but they were sublime—I grasped a mighty whole, and smiled on the king of terrors; the tie which bound me to my friends he could not break; the same mysterious knot united me to the source of all goodness and happiness.

This striking passage concludes the *Cave of Fancy*:

> He who formed the human soul, only can fill it, and the chief happiness of an immortal being must arise from the same source as its existence. Earthly love leads to heavenly, and prepared us for a more exalted state; if it does not change its nature and destroy itself, by trampling on the virtue, that constitutes its essence, and allies us to the Deity.

The sensation, technically known as 'a state of ecstasy,' is again expressed in her reply to Burke, written three years later:

> . . . When we walk along the accustomed path, and, almost fancying nature dead, ask, Where art thou who gave life to these well-known scenes?

When memory heightens former pleasures to contrast our present prospects—there is but one source of comfort within our reach; and in this sublime solitude the world appears to contain only the Creator and the creature, of whose happiness he is the source.

Towards the conclusion of her life Mary wrote in the fragmentary *Hints, designed for a continuation of the Rights of Woman*, a passage which again displays this feeling:

. . . reason in this world is the mother of wisdom —yet some flights of the imagination seem to reach what wisdom cannot teach—and, while they delude us here, afford a glorious hope, if not a foretaste, of what we may expect hereafter. He that created us, did not mean to mark us with ideal images of grandeur, *the baseless fabric of a vision*—No. That perfection we follow with hopeless ardour when the whisperings of reason are heard, may be found, when not incompatible with our state, in the round of eternity.

Mary's adoration of imagination and fancy, and her corresponding disdain for base reason, resemble those of her friend William Blake. A further instance of her mysticism is supplied by a paragraph in her little essay *On Poetry and Our Relish for the Beauties of Nature*:

Love to man leads to devotion—grand and sublime images strike the imagination—God is seen in every floating cloud, and comes from the misty mountain to receive the noblest homage of an intelligent creature—praise. How solemn is the moment, when all affections and remembrances fade before the sublime admiration which the wisdom

and goodness of God inspires, when he is worshipped in a *temple not made with hands*, and the world seems to contain only the mind that formed, and the mind that contemplates it! These are not the weak responses of ceremonial devotion; nor, to express them, would the poet need another poet's aid; his heart burns within him, and he speaks the language of truth and nature with resistless energy!

In the last work Mary wrote—*The Wrongs of Woman: or Maria, a Fragment*—she still displays this feeling:

I recollected with what fervour I addressed the God of my youth: and once more with rapturous love looked above my sorrows to the Father of nature. I pause—feeling forcibly all the emotions I am describing; and reminded, as I register my sorrows, of the sublime calm I have felt, when in some tremendous solitude, my soul rested on itself, and seemed to fill the universe; I insensibly breathe soft, hushing every wayward emotion, as if fearing to sully with a sigh, a contentment so ecstatic.

And, again, in the same *Fragment:*

. . . How had I panted for liberty—liberty that I would have purchased at any price, but that of my own esteem! I rose, and shook myself; opened the window, and methought the air never smelled so sweet. The face of heaven grew fairer as I viewed it, and the clouds seemed to flit away obedient to my wishes, to give my soul room to expand. I was all soul, and (wild as it may appear) felt as if I could have dissolved in the soft balmy gale that kissed my cheek, or have glided below the horizon on the glowing, descending beams. A seraphic satisfaction animated, without agitating my spirits; and my imagination collected, in visions sublimely terrible,

or soothingly beautiful, an immense variety of the endless images, which nature affords, and fancy combines, of the grand and fair. The lustre of these bright picturesque sketches faded with the setting sun ; but I was still alive to the calm delight they had diffused through my heart.

Wishing to be quite sure that my interpretation was correct, I sent two of the preceding passages to Mr. Foster Damon, whose recent work on Blake has established him as an authority on mysticism. He replied :

> Your citations from Mary Wollstonecraft are *certainly* true mysticism : the record of authentic ecstasy. It is not, of course, of the enthusiastic and visionary degree which Blake cultivated ; it is more akin to Wordsworth's and Tennyson's. But it is all the same ultimately. And the lines in which she expresses it are the most beautiful of hers that I have ever read.

. . . . . .

I have now to express thanks and grateful acknowledgments to the many individuals who have kindly aided me in the production of this book.

Earliest, in point of time, to John Wilson Townsend, of Lexington, Kentucky, himself a Kentucky author, whose books : *Kentuckians in History and Literature* (1907) and *Kentucky in American Letters* (1913) first aroused my interest in Imlay ; and to Miss Louise Kellogg of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, and Mrs. Charles F. Norton, Librarian, Transylvania College, Lexington, for

papers, letters and facts about that same person.

I am indebted to many librarians and members of library staffs, among whom I want to express my grateful thanks to Dr. A. W. Pollard, late Keeper of Printed Books, British Museum, and to the Deputy Keeper, Mr. A. F. Sharp, for information on books I could obtain in no other library; to Mr. J. L. Farnum, Secretary to the Librarian of Congress, Washington; to Mr. Walter B. Briggs, Assistant Librarian, Harvard College Library; Miss Harriet Swift, of the Public Library of the City of Boston; Mr. C. K. Bolton, Secretary and Librarian, Boston Athenaeum; Dr. George Watson Cole, Librarian of the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Museum, San Marino, California, for two unpublished letters; to Miss Anne S. Pratt, Assistant Librarian, Yale University Library; and to Mr. C. F. M'Combs, Superintendent, Main Reading Room, the New York Public Library.

I want to thank Miss Joan Joshua for the remarkably intelligent research work she accomplished for me in the British Museum. To her I am indebted for the biographical account of G. J. Schweizer and his wife Madeleine, and for many details in the Bibliography.

To four other friends, not connected directly with libraries, but all interested in books (and in this particular book as well), who have

assisted me in many various ways, I hereby express my grateful thanks :

First, to A. Edward Newton, of Philadelphia, for his gift of photographs of the ten sepia drawings made by Blake for the 1791 edition of Mary's *Original Stories from Real Life*, which are now in his possession. The importance of their appearance here, in the form in which they are given, may be emphasized by stating the facts that (*a*) they have never before been published as a complete group ; that (*b*) only two (II and III reproduced by Geoffrey Keynes in his admirable *Bibliography of William Blake*) have ever been reproduced photographically direct from the drawings ; that (*c*) two (I and VI) are here reproduced for the first time by any process ; and finally, that (*d*) the six remaining drawings—five of which were engraved by Blake for the book (IV, VII, VIII, IX and X) and the other made into a woodcut for Gilchrist (V)—are nearly all, in their pristine state, as here shown, more brilliant impressions, and more gracefully designed, than the prints from the engravings made after them. This applies particularly to the lovely group of three graceful slender figures (IV) which Blake engraved for the frontispiece.

Second, to Michael Sadleir of London—with whom I first became acquainted through my enjoyment in his fine novel *Privilege* (1921), and his equally interesting *Excursions in Victorian Bibliography* (1922)—for his con-

stant interest in my work, and his prompt replies to my many queries.

Third, to Frederick Coykendall, of New York, for the loan of his copy of *Mary, A Fiction*, formerly in the possession of Frederick Locker Lampson, and annotated by him.

Fourth, to Elizabeth Robins Pennell, herself the author of an excellent *Life of Mary Wollstonecraft*, who has furnished me with material collected while she was writing it, has encouraged me by her unfailing interest, and has benefited this book by wise suggestions and judicious advice.

My researches have taken on an international aspect, and I must acknowledge the careful and painstaking research of American Consul Walter H. Sholes of Gothenburg, which resulted ' by singular good fortune ' (as Mr. Sholes wrote) in his finding, in Stockholm, a descendant of that Elias Backman who is mentioned in the document Imlay gave Mary to take to Sweden, authorizing her to act on his behalf in ' the tryal now carrying on, instigated by Mr. Elias Bachman (*sic*), as my agent, for the violation of the trust which I had reposed in his (Peter Ellyson's) integrity.' This gentleman, Mr. Pierre Backman, very kindly sent me a comprehensive biography of his ancestor, Imlay's ' agent ' and business associate in Paris.

I must also thank the American Consul at Hull for putting me in communication with the sister and son of Walter Consitt Boulter

who notified all those interested in Mary—through *Notes and Queries*—of her letters in *English Exercises*. Unfortunately the book was not in Mr. Boulter's library when he died, and is still as inaccessible as ever.

And my final vote of thanks must go to the Department of State, which very kindly instituted an investigation into its files at the Paris Embassy and also at Washington for any record of that 'certificate from the American minister, as the wife of a native of that country.'

I think I may claim to be the most faithful, constant, and unfailing lover Mary Wollstonecraft ever had. Mary and I have lived together now, off and on, for four years, although 'from the nature of' our 'connection,' she has not yet obtained 'a certificate from the American minister as the wife of a native of that country.'

Often have I felt, while engaged in typing my MS., that this charming creature was in the same room with me, looking over my shoulder every now and then, to discover whether the paragraphs then visible were pleasant or painful reading to her.

When I started putting my Supplement together, I turned to her usual corner, to see whether she were still with me. There indeed she sat, looking at me with her brilliant brown eyes, and the smile on her mobile, expressive face that was always her particular charm.

'Mary, dear,' I said, 'I'm just beginning my Supplement—How would you like to collaborate with me in the writing of it?' And she responded, 'To be sure, my dear,—I've been reading, all along, the many pages you have typed about me, and I want you to know how happy it's made me to find a new friend, in this new century and in this new country where I've always longed to dwell, who says kind things about me, in place of those hateful reviewers who wrote such dreadful scurrilous articles, only a few months after I was laid in St. Pancras's Churchyard! Tell me what you want me to write, and I'll be only too glad to do it!'

I feel as though Mary might have written me this note:[7]

Tuesday morning.

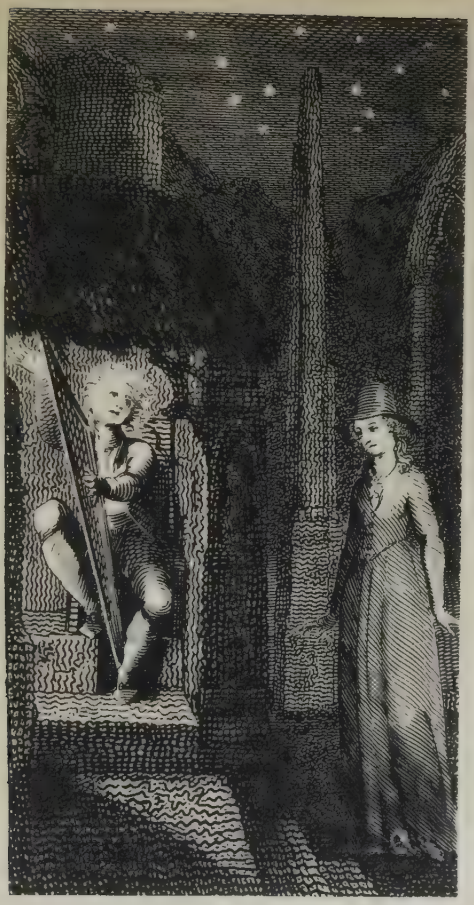
The books sent to me are such as we may read together; so I shall not look at them till you return; when you shall read, whilst I mend my stockings.

Yours truly,

MARY.

[7] *Posthumous Works*, Letter IX, iii. 23.

MEMOIRS OF
MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT



"Trying to trace the sound, I discovered a little hut, rudely built"

Drawn and engraved by William Blake and published in 1791 *as an illustration to "Original Stories from Real Life"*

(*cf.* below, pp. 44 and 208)

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

GODWIN'S *Memoirs*, first published in January 1798, were attacked by a flood of condemnatory reviews in current periodicals. Influenced, perhaps, by this storm of criticism, Godwin prepared 'The Second Edition, Corrected,' published some months later in the same year.

In this more discreet 'Second Edition' Godwin made many changes; eliminating, for instance: the 'frequent intercourse' of Joseph Gascoyne and his family 'with the family of Mary' during their stay near Barking—'the acquaintance of the Wollstonecrafts' in Wales with 'the family of a Mr. Allen'—the 'son already adult' of 'Mrs. Dawson of Bath'—Mary's unbelief in 'the doctrine of future punishments'—and other incidents susceptible of misconstruction. Godwin frequently changed the wording, and in two places rewrote several paragraphs. He also inserted additions here and there.

My practice in selecting the text has been to use that of the first edition throughout, save in cases where Godwin's revisions add to clarity or correctness.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

Wherever the second edition text is substituted, the variant is marked below, 1*st ed.* All variants without this designation are variants in the second edition.

Passages, phrases or words in the text enclosed between brackets, are added in the second edition.

The text of two passages which were entirely re-written for the second edition—Mary's affection for Fuseli, and the mutual influence of Mary and Godwin upon each other—is placed after 'THE END.'

Through the whole course of this delightful book I have adhered religiously to Godwin's idiosyncrasies in spelling, punctuation, and use of capital and small letters. I have put in every superfluous comma, and have gaily allowed him to spell cheerfully, chearfully, and *vice versa*, as the fancy seized him. The only feature omitted is the old fashioned 's.'

MEMOIRS

It has always appeared to me, that to give the public some account of the life of a person of eminent merit deceased, is a duty incumbent on survivors. It seldom happens that such a person passes through life, without being the subject of malignant[1] calumny, or thoughtless[2] misrepresentation. It cannot happen that the public at large should be on a footing with their intimate acquaintance, and be the observer of those virtues which discover themselves principally in personal intercourse. Every benefactor of mankind is more or less influenced by a liberal passion for fame; and survivors only pay a debt due[3] to these benefactors, when they assert and establish on their part, the honour they loved. The justice which is thus done to the illustrious dead, converts into the fairest source of animation and encouragement to those who would follow them[4] in the same career. The human species at large is interested in this justice, as it teaches them to place their

[1] malignant] thoughtless 1*st ed.*
[2] thoughtless] malignant 1*st ed.*
[3] due *del.* [4] them *del.*

respect and affection, upon those qualities which best deserve to be esteemed and loved. I cannot easily prevail on myself to doubt, that the more fully we are presented with the picture and story of such persons as the subject of the following narrative, the more generally shall we feel in ourselves a sympathy in [1] their fate, and an attachment to [2] their excellencies. There are not many individuals with whose character the public welfare and improvement are more intimately connected, than the author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.

The facts detailed in the following pages, are principally taken from the mouth of the person to whom they relate; and of the veracity and ingenuousness of her habits, perhaps no one that was ever acquainted with her, entertains a doubt. The writer of this narrative, when he has met with persons, that in any degree created to themselves an interest and attachment in his mind, has always felt a curiosity to be acquainted with the scenes through which they had passed, and the incidents that had contributed to form their understandings and character. Impelled by this sentiment, he repeatedly led the conversation of Mary [3] to topics of this sort; and, once or twice, he made notes in her presence, of a few dates calculated to arrange

[1] a sympathy in] an attachment to 1*st ed.*

[2] an attachment to] a sympathy in 1*st ed.*

[3] Mary] her whose story he now undertakes to record.

the circumstances in his mind. To the materials thus collected, he has added an industrious enquiry among the persons most intimately acquainted with her at the different periods of her life.

CHAPTER I

1759-1775

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT was born on the 27th[1] of April 1759. Her father's name was Edward John, and the name of her mother Elizabeth, of the family of Dixons of Ballyshannon in the kingdom of Ireland: her paternal grandfather was a respectable manufacturer in Spitalfields, and is supposed to have left to his son a property of about 10,000*l*. Three of her brothers and two sisters are still living; their names, Edward, James, Charles, Eliza, and Everina. Of these, Edward only was older than herself; he resides in London. James is in Paris, and Charles in or near Philadelphia in America. Her sisters have for some years been engaged in the office of governesses in private families, and are both at present in Ireland.[2]

I am doubtful whether the father of Mary was bred to any profession; but, about the time of her birth, he resorted, rather perhaps as an amusement than a business, to the

[1] 27th] twenty-seventh.

[2] he resides . . . in Ireland *del.*

occupation of farming. He was of a very [3] active, and somewhat versatile disposition, and so frequently changed his abode, as to throw some ambiguity upon the place of her birth. She told me, that the doubt in her mind in that respect, lay between London, and a farm upon Epping Forest, which was the principal scene of the first five [4] years of her life.

Mary was distinguished in early youth, by some portion [5] of that exquisite sensibility, soundness of understanding, and decision of character, which were the leading features of her mind through the whole course of her [5] life. She experienced in the first period of her existence, but [6] few of those indulgences and marks of affection, which are principally calculated to sooth the subjection and sorrows of our early years. She was not the favourite either of her father or mother. Her father was a man of a quick, [and] impetuous disposition,[7] subject to alternate fits of kindness and cruelty.[8] In his family he was a despot,[9] and his wife appears to have been the first, and most submissive of his subjects. The mother's partiality was fixed upon the eldest son, and her system of government relative to Mary, was characterized by con-

[3] very *del.*
[4] first five] five first 1*st ed.*
[5] some portion] the indications.
[5] whole course of her] course of her subsequent.
[6] but *del.*
[7] disposition] temper.
[8] cruelty] severity.
[9] a despot] absolute.

siderable rigour. She, at length, became convinced of her mistake, and adopted a different plan with her younger daughters. When, in the Wrongs of Woman, Mary speaks of "the petty cares which obscured the morning of her heroine's life; continual restraint in the most trivial matters; unconditional submission to orders, which, as a mere child, she soon discovered to be unreasonable, because inconsistent and contradictory; and the being often obliged to sit, in the presence of her parents, for three or four hours together, without daring to utter a word;" she is, I believe, to be considered as copying[1] the outline of the first period of her own existence.

But it was in vain that the blighting winds of unkindness or indifference, seemed destined to counteract the superiority of Mary's mind. It surmounted every obstacle; and by degrees, from a person little considered in the family, she became in some sort its director and umpire. The despotism[2] of her education cost[3] her many a heart-ache. She was not formed to be the contented and unresisting subject of a despot; but I have heard her remark more than once, that, when she felt she had done wrong, the reproof or chastisement of her mother, instead of being a terror to her, she found to be the only thing capable of reconciling her to herself. The blows of

[1] copying] tracing.
[2] despotism] rigidness.
[3] cost] occasioned.

her father, on the contrary, which were the mere ebullitions of a passionate temper, instead of humbling her [4] roused her indignation. Upon such occasions she felt her superiority, and was apt to betray marks of contempt. The quickness of her father's temper, led him sometimes to threaten [5] similar violence towards [6] his wife. When that was the case, Mary would often throw herself between the despot and his victim, with the purpose to receive upon her own person the blows that might be directed against her mother. She has even laid whole nights upon the landing-place near [7] their chamber-door, when, mistakenly, or with reason, she apprehended that her father might break out into paroxysms of violence. The conduct he held [8] towards the members of his family, was of the same kind as that [9] he observed towards animals. He was for the most part extravagantly fond of them ; but, when he was displeased, and this frequently happened, and for very [1] trivial reasons, his anger was alarming. Mary was what Dr. Johnson would have called, "a very good hater." In some instance of passion [2]

[4] her *del.* [5] threaten] menace. [6] towards] to.

[7] upon the landing-place near] at.

[8] held] pursued.

[9] of the same kind as that] similar to that which.

[1] very *del.*

[2] In some instance of passion] Upon some occasion of severity.

exercised by her father to one of his dogs, she was accustomed to speak of her emotions of abhorrence, as having risen [3] to agony. In a word, her conduct during her girlish years, was such, as to extort some portion of affection from her mother, and to hold her father in considerable awe.

In one respect, the system of education of the mother appears to have had merit. All her children were vigorous and healthy. This seems very much to depend upon the management of our infant years. It is affirmed by some persons of the present day, most profoundly [4] skilled in the sciences [5] of health and disease, that there is no period of human life so little subject to mortality, as the period of infancy. Yet, from the mismanagement to which children are exposed, many of the diseases of childhood are rendered fatal, and more persons [actually] die in that, than in any other period [6] of human life. Mary had projected a work upon this subject, which she had carefully considered, and well understood. She has indeed left a specimen of her skill in this respect in her eldest daughter, three years and a half old, who is a singular example of vigorous constitution and florid health. Mr. Anthony Carlisle, surgeon, of Soho-square, a name eminently dear to genius and science,[7]

[3] risen] arisen.

[4] most profoundly] eminently.

[5] sciences] science.

[6] period] stage.

[7] a name eminently dear . . . science] whom to name is sufficiently to honour *1st ed.*

had promised to revise her production. This is but one out [8] of numerous projects[9] of activity and usefulness, which her untimely death has fatally terminated.

The rustic situation in which Mary spent her infancy, no doubt contributed to confirm the stamina of her constitution. She sported in the open air, and amidst the picturesque and refreshing scenes of nature, for which she always retained the most exquisite relish. Dolls and the other toys usually appropriated to the amusement of [1] female children, she held in contempt; and felt a much [2] greater propensity to join in the active and hardy sports of her brothers, than to confine herself to those of her own sex.

About the time that Mary completed the fifth year of her age, her father removed to a small distance from his former habitation upon Epping Forest, and took a farm near the Whalebone,[3] a little way out of the Chelmsford road. In Michaelmas 1765, he once more changed his residence, and occupied a convenient house behind the town of Barking in Essex, eight miles from London. In this situation some of their nearest neighbours were, Bamber Gascoyne, esquire, successively

[8] out *del.* [9] projects] purposes.

[1] toys usually . . . amusement of] amusements usually appropriated to 1*st ed.*

[2] much *del.*

[3] upon Epping Forest . . . near the Whalebone] and took a farm near the Whalebone upon Epping Forest 1*st ed.*

member of parliament for several boroughs, and his brother, Mr. Joseph Gascoyne. [I mention this circumstance on account of its connection with the topography of the spot.] Bamber Gascoyne resided but little on this spot; but his brother was almost a constant inhabitant, and his family in habits of the most frequent intercourse with the family of Mary.[4] Here Mr. Wollstonecraft remained for three years. In September 1796, I accompanied my wife in a visit to this spot. No person reviewed with greater sensibility, the scenes of her childhood. We found the house uninhabited, and the garden in a wild and ruinous state. She renewed her acquaintance with the market-place, the streets, and the wharf, the latter of which we found crowded with barges, and full of activity.

In Michaelmas 1768, Mr. Wollstonecraft again removed to a farm near Beverley in Yorkshire. Here the family remained for[5] six years, and consequently, Mary did not quit this residence until she had attained the age of fifteen years and five months. The principal part of her school-education passed during this period; but it was not to any advantage of infant literature, that she was indebted for her subsequent eminence; her education in this respect was merely such, as was afforded by the day-schools of the place,

[4] Bamber Gascoyne resided but little . . . family of Mary *del.*

[5] for *del.*

in which she resided. To her recollections [6] Beverley appeared a very [7] handsome town, surrounded by genteel families, and with a brilliant assembly. She was surprized, when she visited it in 1795, upon her voyage to Norway, to find the reality so very [8] much below the picture in her imagination.

Hitherto Mr. Wollstonecraft had been a farmer; but the restlessness of his disposition would not suffer him to content himself with the occupation in which for some years he had been engaged, and the temptation of a commercial speculation of some sort [9] being held out to him, he removed to a house in Queen's-Row, in Hoxton near London, for the purpose of its execution. Here he remained for a year and a half; but, being frustrated in his expectations of profit, he, after that term, gave up the project in which he was [1] engaged, and returned to his former pursuits. During this residence in Hoxton, the writer of these memoirs inhabited, as a student, at [2] the dissenting college in that place. It is perhaps [3] a question of curious speculation to enquire, what would have been the amount of the difference in the pursuits and enjoyments of each party, if they had met, and considered each other with the same distinguishing regard in 1776, as they

[6] recollections] recollection.
[7] very *del.* [8] very *del.*
[9] of some sort *del.* [1] was] had. [2] at *del.*
[3] is perhaps] might perhaps be.

were afterwards impressed with in the year 1796. The writer had then completed the twentieth, and Mary the seventeenth year of her age. Which would have been predominant; the disadvantages of obscurity, and the pressure of a family; or the gratifications and improvement that might have flowed from their intercourse?

One of the acquaintances Mary formed at this time was with a Mr. Clare, who inhabited the next house to that which was tenanted by her father, and to whom she was probably in some degree indebted for the early cultivation of her mind. Mr. Clare was a clergyman, and appears to have been a humourist of a very [4] singular cast. In his person he was deformed and delicate; and his figure, I am told, bore a resemblance to that of the celebrated Pope. He had a fondness for poetry, and was not destitute of taste. His manners were expressive of a tenderness and benevolence, the demonstrations of which appeared to have been somewhat too artificially cultivated. His habits were those of a perfect recluse. He seldom went out of his drawing-room, and he showed to a friend of Mary a pair of shoes, which had served, him, he said, for fourteen years. Mary frequently spent days and weeks together, at the house of Mr. Clare.

[It is easy to perceive that this connection was of a character different from those to which she had hitherto been accustomed. It

[4] very *del.*

were to be desired that the biographer of persons of eminent talents, should possess the means of analysing the causes by which they were modified, and tracing methodically the progress of their minds. But though this can seldom be performed, he ought probably not to neglect to record the fragments of progress and cultivation that may have come down to him. A censurable fastidiousness only, could teach us to reject information, because that information is imperfect.]

CHAPTER II

1775-1783

But a connection more[1] memorable originated about this time, between Mary and a person of her own sex, for whom she contracted a friendship so fervent,[2] as for years to have constituted the ruling passion of her mind. The name of this person was Frances Blood ; she was two years older than Mary. Her residence was at that time at Newington Butts, a village near the southern extremity of the metropolis ; and the original instrument for bringing these two friends acquainted,[3] was Mrs. Clare, wife of the gentleman already mentioned, who was on a footing of considerable intimacy with both parties. The acquaintance of Fanny, like that of Mr. Clare, contributed to ripen the immature talents of Mary.[4]

The situation in which Mary was introduced to her, bore a resemblance to the first inter-

[1] But a connection more] A Connection still more.

[2] fervent] warm.

[3] original instrument . . . acquainted] person who introduced them to each other's acquaintance.

[4] Mary] Fanny.

view of Werter with Charlotte. She [5] was conducted to the door of a small house, but furnished with peculiar [6] neatness and propriety. The first object that caught her sight, was a young woman of a slender and elegant form, and eighteen years of age, busily employed in feeding and managing some children, born of the same parents, but considerably inferior to her in age. The impression Mary received from a scene, which so happily accorded with her two most cherished conceptions, the picturesque and the affectionate,[7] was indelible ; and, before the interview was concluded, she had taken, in her heart, the vows of an eternal friendship.

Fanny was a young woman of extraordinary accomplishments. She sung and played with taste. She drew with exquisite [8] fidelity and neatness ; and, by the employment [9] of this talent, for some time maintained her father, mother, and family, but ultimately ruined her health by her extraordinary exertions.[1] She read and wrote with considerable application ; and the same ideas of minute and delicate propriety followed her in these, as in her other occupations.

[5] bore a resemblance . . . Charlotte. She] was peculiarly adapted to conciliate a mind of simplicity and affection. Mary.

[6] peculiar] much.

[7] a scene, which . . . the affectionate,] this spectacle 1*st ed.*

[8] exquisite] uncommon. [9] employment] exertion.

[1] exertions] assiduity.

Mary, a wild, but animated and aspiring girl of sixteen, contemplated Fanny, in the first instance, with sentiments of inferiority and reverence. Though they were much together, yet, the distance of their habitations being considerable, they supplied the want of more frequent interviews by an assiduous correspondence. Mary found Fanny's letters better spelt and better indited than her own, and felt herself abashed. She had hitherto paid but a superficial attention to literature. She had read, to gratify the ardour of an inextinguishable thirst of knowledge; but she had not thought of writing as an art. Her ambition to excel was now awakened, and she applied herself with passion and earnestness. Fanny undertook to be her instructor; and, so [2] far as related to accuracy and method, her lessons were given with considerable skill.

It has already been mentioned that, in the spring of the year 1776, Mr. Wollstonecraft quitted his situation at Hoxton, and returned to his former agricultural pursuits. The situation upon which he now fixed was in Wales, a circumstance that was felt as a severe blow to Mary's darling spirit of friendship. The principal acquaintance of the Wollstonecrafts in this retirement, was the family of a Mr. Allen, two of whose daughters are since married to the two elder sons of the celebrated English potter, Josiah Wedgwood.[3]

[2] so] as.

[3] The principal acquaintance . . . Josiah Wedgwood. *del.*

Wales however was Mr. Wollstonecraft's residence for little more than a year. He returned to the neighborhood of London; and Mary, whose ascendancy in some respects had now become considerable, was able[4] to determine his choice in favour of the village of Walworth, that she might be near her chosen friend. It was probably before this, that she had once or twice started the idea of quitting her[5] parental roof, and providing for herself. But she was prevailed upon to resign this idea, and conditions were stipulated with her, relative to her having an apartment in the house that should be exclusively her own, and her commanding the other requisites of study. She did not however think herself fairly treated in these instances, and either the conditions abovementioned, [*sic*] or some others, were not observed in the sequel, with the fidelity she expected. In one case, she had procured an eligible situation, and every thing was settled respecting her removal to it, when the intreaties and tears of her mother led her to surrender her own inclinations, and abandon the engagement.

These however were only temporary delays. Her propensities continued the same, and the motives by which she was influenced[6] were unabated. In the year 1778, she being nineteen years of age, a proposal was made to her

[4] ascendancy . . . was able] spirit of independence was unalterable, had influence enough 1*st ed.*

[5] her] the

[6] influenced] instigated 1*st ed*

of living as a companion with a Mrs. Dawson of Bath, a widow lady, with one son already adult.[7] Upon enquiry she found that Mrs. Dawson was a woman of great peculiarity of temper, that she had had a variety of companions in succession, and that no one had found it practicable to continue with her. Mary was not discouraged by this information and accepted the situation, with a resolution that she would effect in this respect,[8] what none of her predecessors had been able to do. In the sequel she had reason to consider the account she had received as sufficiently accurate, but she did not relax in her endeavours. By method, constancy and firmness, she found the means of making her situation tolerable; and Mrs. Dawson would occasionally confess, that Mary was the only person that had lived with her in that situation, in her treatment of whom she had felt herself under any restraint.

With Mrs. Dawson she continued to reside for two years, and only left her, summoned by the melancholy circumstance of her mother's rapidly declining health. True to the calls of humanity,[9] Mary felt in this intelligence an irresistible motive, and eagerly returned to the paternal roof, which she had before resolutely quitted. The residence of her father at this time, was at Enfield near London. He

[7] a widow lady . . . adult.] the widow of an opulent tradesman of the city of London.

[8] respect] article. [9] True to the calls of humanity *del.*

had, I believe, given up agriculture from the time of his quitting Wales, it appearing to be now [1] less a source of profit than loss, and it being consequently [2] thought advisable that he should rather live upon the interest of his fortune.[3]

The illness of Mrs. Wollstonecraft was lingering, but hopeless. Mary was assiduous in her attendance upon her mother. At first, every attention was received with acknowledgments and gratitude; but, as the attentions grew habitual, and the health of the mother more and more wretched, they were rather exacted, than received. Nothing would be taken by the unfortunate patient, but from the hands of Mary; rest was denied night or day, and by the time nature was exhausted in the parent, the daughter was qualified to assume her place, and become in turn herself a patient. The last words her mother ever uttered were, "A little patience, and all will be over!" and these words are repeatedly referred to by Mary in the course of her writings.

Upon the death of Mrs. Wollstonecraft, Mary bid [4] final adieu to the roof of her father. According to my memorandums, I find her next the inmate of Fanny at Walham Green, near the village of Fulham. Upon

[1] to be now] that he now made it 1*st ed.*

[2] it being consequently] being 1*st ed.*

[3] fortune] property already in possession 1*st ed.*

[4] bid] bad.

what plan they now lived together I am unable to ascertain; certainly not that of Mary [5] becoming in any degree [6] an additional burthen upon the industry of her friend. Thus situated, their intimacy ripened; they approached more nearly to a footing of equality; and their attachment became more rooted and active.

Mary was ever ready at the call of distress, and, in particular, during her whole life was eager and active to promote the welfare of every member of her family. In 1780 she attended the deathbed of her mother; in 1782 she was summoned by a not less melancholy occasion,[7] to attend her sister Eliza, married to a Mr. Bishop, who, subsequently to a dangerous lying-in, remained for some months in a very afflicting situation. Mary continued with her sister without intermission, to her perfect recovery.

[5] Mary] Mary's. [6] in any degree *del.*

[7] by a not less melancholy occasion] in a not less critical circumstance.

CHAPTER III

1783-1785

MARY was[1] now arrived at the twenty-fourth year of her age. Her project, five years before, had been personal independence; it was now usefulness. In the solitude of attendance on her sister's illness, and during the subsequent convalescence,[2] she had had leisure to ruminate upon plans for this purpose.[3] Her expanded mind led her to seek something more arduous than the mere removal of personal vexations; and the sensibility of her heart would not suffer her to rest in solitary gratifications. The derangement of her father's affairs daily became more and more glaring; and a small independent provision made for herself and her sisters, appears to have been sacrificed in the wreck. For ten years, from 1782 to 1792, she may be said to have been, in a great degree, the victim of a desire to promote the benefit of others. She did not foresee the severe disappointment

[1] was] had.

[2] and during the subsequent convalescence *del.*

[3] plans for this purpose] purposes of this sort 1*st ed.*

with which an exclusive purpose of this sort is pregnant; she was inexperienced enough to lay a stress upon the consequent gratitude of those she benefited; and she did not sufficiently consider that, in proportion as we involve ourselves in the [4] interests and society of others, we acquire a more exquisite sense of their defects, and are tormented with their untractableness and folly. [Her mistakes in this respect were two: she engaged herself too minutely and too deeply in the care of their welfare; and she was too much impressed by any seeming want of ingenuous and honourable feeling on the part of those she benefited. In the mixed scene of human life, it is necessary that, while we take some care for others, we should leave scope for the display of their own prudence and reason; and that, when we have discharged our duty respecting them, we should be habituated to derive a principal consolation from the consciousness of having done so.]

The project upon which she now [5] determined, was no other than [6] that of a day-school, to be superintended by Fanny Blood, herself, and her two sisters. They accordingly opened one in the year 1783, at the village of Islington; but in the course of a few months removed it to Newington Green.

Here Mary formed some acquaintances who [7] influenced the future events of her life. The

[4] the *del.*
[5] now *del.*
[6] no other than *del.*
[7] who] that.

first of these in her own estimation, was Dr. Richard Price, well known for his political and mathematical calculations, and universally esteemed by those who knew him, for the simplicity of his manners, and the ardour of his benevolence. The regard conceived by these two persons for each other, was mutual, and partook of a spirit of the purest attachment. Mary had been bred in the principles of the church of England, but her esteem for this venerable preacher led her occasionally to attend upon [8] his public instructions. Her religion was, in reality, little allied to any system of forms; and, as she has often told me, was founded rather in taste, than in the niceties of polemical discussion. Her mind constitutionally attached itself to the sublime and the amiable. She found an inexpressible delight in the beauties of nature, and in the splendid reveries of the imagination. But nature itself, she thought, would be no better than a vast blank, if the mind of the observer did not supply it with an animating soul. When she walked amidst the wonders of nature, she was accustomed to converse with her God. To her mind he was pictured as not less amiable, generous and kind, than great, wise and exalted. In fact, she had received few lessons of religion in her youth, and her religion was almost entirely of her own creation.[9] But she was not on that account the less attached to it, or the less

[8] upon *del.* [9] creation] creating.

scrupulous in discharging what she considered as its duties. She could not recollect the time when she had believed the doctrine of future punishments.[1] The tenets of her system were the growth of her own moral taste, and her religion therefore had always been a gratification, never a terror, to her. She expected a future state; but she would not allow her ideas of that future[2] state to be modified by the notions of judgment and retribution. From this sketch, it is sufficiently[3] evident, that the pleasure she took in an occasional attendance upon the sermons of Dr. Price, was not accompanied with a superstitious adherence to his doctrines. The fact is, that, as far down as the year 1787, she regularly frequented public worship, for the most part according to the forms of the church of England. After that period her attendance became less constant, and in no long time was wholly discontinued. I believe it may be admitted as a maxim, that no person of a well furnished mind, that has shaken off the implicit subjection of youth, and is not the zealous partizan of a sect, can bring himself to conform to the public and regular routine of sermons and prayers.

Another of the friends she acquired at this period, was Mrs. Burgh, widow of the author of the Political Disquisitions, a woman universally well spoken of for the warmth and

[1] or the less . . . future punishments *del.*
[2] future *del.* [3] sufficiently *del.*

purity of her benevolence. Mary, whenever she had occasion to allude to her, to the last period of her life, paid the tribute due to her virtues.[4] The only remaining friend necessary to be enumerated in this place, is the rev. John Hewlet, now master of a boarding-school at Shacklewel near Hackney,[5] whom I shall have [further] occasion to mention hereafter.

It was [also] during her residence at Newington Green, that she was introduced to the acquaintance of Dr. Johnson, who was at that time considered as in some sort the father of English literature. The doctor treated her with particular kindness and attention, had a long conversation with her, and desired her to repeat her visit often. This she firmly purposed to do; but the news of his last illness, and then of his death, intervened to prevent her making a second visit.[6]

I have already said that Fanny's health had been materially injured by her incessant labours for the maintenance of her family. She had also suffered a disappointment, which preyed upon her mind. To these different sources [7] of ill health she became gradually a victim; and at length discovered all the symptoms of a pulmonary consumption. By

[4] Mary . . . virtues *del.*

[5] The only remaining . . . near Hackney] In the catalogue of friends acquired at this period, I may likewise include the rev. John Hewlet, a popular preacher in the established church.

[6] making a second visit] seeing him a second time.

[7] sources] causes.

the medical men that attended her, she was advised to try the effects of a southern climate; and, about the beginning of the year 1785, sailed for Lisbon.

The first feeling with which Mary had contemplated her friend, was a sentiment of inferiority and reverence; but that, from the operation of a ten years' acquaintance was considerably changed. Fanny had originally been far before her in literary attainments; this disparity no longer existed. In whatever degree Mary might endeavour to free herself from the delusions of self-esteem, this period of observation upon her own mind and that of her friend, could not pass, without her perceiving that there were some essential characteristics of genius, which she possessed, and in which her friend was deficient. The principal of these was a firmness of mind, an unconquerable greatness of soul, by which, after a short internal struggle, she was [for the most part] accustomed to rise above difficulties and suffering. Whatever Mary undertook, she perhaps in all instances accomplished; and, to her lofty spirit, scarcely any thing she desired, appeared hard to perform. Fanny, on the contrary, was a woman of a timid and irresolute nature, accustomed to yield to difficulties, and probably priding herself in this morbid softness of her temper. One instance that I have heard Mary relate of this sort, was, that, at a certain time, Fanny, dissatisfied with her domestic situation,

expressed an earnest desire to have a home of her own. Mary, who felt nothing more pressing than to relieve the inconveniences of her friend, determined to accomplish this object for her. It cost her infinite exertions ; but at length she was able to announce to Fanny that a house was prepared, and that she was on the spot to receive her. The answer which Fanny returned to the letter of her friend, consisted almost wholly of an enumeration of objections to the quitting her family, which she had not thought of before, but which now appeared to her of considerable weight.

The judgment which experience had taught Mary to form of the mind of her friend, determined her in the advice she gave, at the period to which I have brought down the story. Fanny was recommended to seek a softer climate, but she had no funds to defray the expence of such an undertaking. At this time Mr. Hugh Skeys of Dublin, but then resident in the kingdom of Portugal, paid his addresses to her. The state of her health Mary considered as such as scarcely to afford the shadow of a hope ; it was not therefore a time at which it was most obvious to think of marriage. She conceived however that nothing should be omitted, which might alleviate, if it could not cure ; and accordingly urged her speedy acceptance of the proposal. Fanny accordingly made the voyage to Lisbon ; and the marriage took place on the twenty-fourth

of February 1785. [The advice of Mary in this instance, though dictated by the sincerest anxiety for her friend's welfare, is scarcely entitled to our approbation.]

From [8] change of climate and situation Fanny found but [9] little benefit; and her life [1] was only prolonged by a period of pregnancy, which soon declared itself. Mary, in the mean time, was impressed with the idea that her friend would die in this distant country; and, shocked with the recollection of her separation from the circle of her friends, determined to pass over to Lisbon to attend her. This resolution was treated by her acquaintance as in the utmost degree [2] visionary; but she was not to be diverted from her point. She had not money to defray her expenses: she must quit for a long time the school, the very existence of which probably depended upon her exertions.

No person was ever better formed for the business of education; if it be not a sort of absurdity to speak of a person as formed for an inferior object, who is in possession of talents, in the fullest degree adequate to something on a more important and comprehensive scale. Mary had a quickness of temper, not apt to take offence with inadvertencies, but which led her to look into the

[8] From] The 1*st ed.*

[9] Fanny found but] was productive of 1*st ed.*

[1] her life] the life of Fanny 1*st ed.*

[2] in the utmost degree *del.*

minds of her acquaintance, and to approve or be displeased, in proportion as they manifested those sentiments, which the persons and the treatment they met with, ought, as she conceived, to excite.[3] She was occasionally severe and imperious in her resentments; and, when she strongly disapproved, was apt to express her censure in terms that gave a very humiliating sensation to the person against whom it was directed. Her displeasure however never assumed its severest form, but when it was barbed by disappointment. Where she expected little, she was not very rigid in her censure of error.

But, to whatever the defects of her temper might amount, they were never exercised upon[4] her inferiors in station or age. She scorned to make use of an ungenerous advantage, or to wound the defenceless. To her servants there never was a mistress more considerate or more kind. With children she was the mirror of patience. Perhaps, in all her extensive experience upon the subject of education, she never betrayed one symptom of irascibility. Her heart was the seat of every benevolent feeling; and accordingly, in all her intercourse with children, it was

[3] look into the minds . . . to excite.] imagine that she saw the mind of the person with whom she had any transaction, and to refer the principle of her approbation or displeasure to the cordiality or injustice of their sentiments. 1*st ed.*

[4] were never exercised upon] entered not into her intercourse with.

kindness and sympathy alone that prompted her conduct. Sympathy, when it mounts to a certain height, inevitably begets affection in the person towards whom it is exercised ; and I have heard her say, that she never was concerned in the education of one child, who was not personally attached to her, and earnestly concerned not to incur her displeasure. Another eminent advantage she possessed in the business of education, was that she was little troubled with scepticism and uncertainty. She saw, as it were by intuition, the path which her mind determined to pursue, and had a firm confidence in her own power to effect what she desired. Yet, with all this, she had scarcely a tincture of obstinacy. She carefully watched symptoms as they rose, and the success of her experiments ; and governed herself accordingly. While I thus enumerate her more than maternal qualities, it is impossible not to feel a pang at the recollection of her orphan children !

Though her friends earnestly dissuaded her from the journey to Lisbon, she found among them a willingness to facilitate the execution of her project, when it was once fixed. Mrs. Burgh in particular, supplied her with money, which however she always conceived came from Dr. Price. This loan, I have reason to believe, was faithfully repaid.

Her residence in Lisbon was not long. She arrived but a short time before her friend was

prematurely delivered, and the event was fatal to both mother and child. Frances Blood, hitherto the chosen object of Mary's attachment, died on the twenty-ninth of November 1785.

It is thus that she speaks of her in her Letters from Norway, written ten years after her decease. "When a warm heart has received strong impressions, they are not to be effaced. Emotions become sentiments; and the imagination renders even transient sensations permanent, by fondly retracing them. I cannot, without a thrill of delight, recollect views I have seen, which are not to be forgotten,—nor looks I have felt in every nerve, which I shall never more meet. The grave has closed over a dear friend, the friend of my youth; still she is present with me, and I hear her soft voice warbling as I stray over the heath."

CHAPTER IV

1785-1787

No doubt the voyage to Lisbon tended considerably to enlarge the understanding of Mary. She was admitted into the best company the English factory afforded. She made many profound observations on the character of the natives, and the baleful effects of superstition. The obsequies of Fanny, which it was necessary to perform by stealth and in darkness, tended to invigorate these observations in her mind.

She sailed upon her voyage home about the twentieth of December. On this occasion a circumstance occurred, that deserves to be recorded. While they were on their passage, they fell in with a French vessel, in great distress, and in daily expectation of foundering at sea, at the same time that it was almost destitute of provisions. The Frenchman hailed them, and intreated the English captain, in consideration of his melancholy situation, to take him and his crew on board. The Englishman represented in reply, that his stock of provisions was by no means adequate

to such an additional number of mouths, and absolutely refused compliance. Mary, shocked at his apparent insensibility, took up the cause of the sufferers, and threatened the captain to have him called to a severe account, when he arrived in England. She finally prevailed, and had the satisfaction to reflect, that the persons in question possibly owed their lives to her interposition.

When she arrived in England, she found that her school had suffered considerably in her absence. It can be little reproach to any one, to say that they were found incapable of supplying her place. She not only excelled in the management of the children, but had also the talent of being attentive and obliging to the parents, without degrading herself.

The period at which I am now arrived is important, as conducting to the first step of her literary career. Mr. Hewlet had frequently mentioned literature to Mary as a certain source of pecuniary produce, and had urged her to make trial of the truth of his judgment. At this time she was desirous of assisting the father and mother of Fanny in an object they had in view, the transporting themselves to Ireland ; and, as usual, what she desired in a pecuniary view, she was ready to take on herself to effect. For this purpose she wrote a duodecimo pamphlet of one hundred and sixty pages, entitled, Thoughts on the Education of Daughters. Mr. Hewlet obtained from the bookseller, Mr. Johnson in

St. Paul's Church Yard, ten guineas for the copy-right of this manuscript, which she immediately applied to the object for the sake of which the pamphlet was written.

Every thing urged Mary to put an end to the affair of the school. She was dissatisfied with the different appearance it presented upon her return, from the state in which she left it. Experience impressed upon her a rooted aversion to that sort of [a] cohabitation with her sisters, which the project of the school imposed. Cohabitation is a point of delicate experiment, and is, in a majority of instances, pregnant with ill-humour and unhappiness. The activity and ardent spirit of adventure which characterized Mary, were not felt in an equal degree by her sisters, so that a disproportionate share of every burthen attendant upon the situation, fell to her lot. On the other hand, they could scarcely perhaps be perfectly easy, in observing the superior degree of deference and courtship,[1] which her merit extorted from almost every one that knew her. Her kindness for them was not diminished, but she resolved that the mode of its exertion in future should be different, tending to their benefit, without intrenching upon her own liberty.

Thus circumscribed, a proposal was made her, such as, regarding only the situations through which she had lately passed, is usually termed advantageous. This was, to accept

[1] courtship] court.

the office of governess to the daughters of lord viscount Kingsborough, eldest son to the earl of Kingston of the kingdom of Ireland. The terms held out to her were such as she determined to accept, at the same time resolving to retain the situation only for a short time. Independence was the object after which she thirsted, and she was fixed to try whether it might not be found in literary occupation. She was desirous however first to accumulate a small sum of money, which should enable her to consider at leisure the different literary engagements that might offer, and provide in some degree for the eventual deficiency of her earliest attempts.

The situation in the family of lord Kingsborough, was offered to her through the medium of the rev. Mr. Prior, at that time one of the under masters of Eton school. She spent some time at the house of this gentleman, immediately after her giving up the school at Newington Green. Here she had an opportunity of making an accurate observation upon the manners and conduct of that celebrated seminary, and the ideas she retained of it were by no means favourable. By all that she saw, she was confirmed in a very favourite opinion of her's, in behalf of day-schools, where, as she expressed it, " children have the opportunity of conversing with children, without interfering with domestic affections, the foundation of virtue."

Though her residence in the family of lord

Kingsborough continued scarcely more than twelve months, she left behind her, with them and their connections, a very advantageous impression. The governesses the young ladies had hitherto had, were only a species of upper servants, controlled in every thing by the mother; Mary insisted upon the unbounded exercise of her own discretion. When the young ladies heard of their governess coming from England, they heard in imagination of a new enemy, and declared their resolution to guard themselves accordingly. Mary however speedily succeeded in gaining their confidence, and the friendship that soon grew up between her and Margaret King, now countess Mount Cashel, the eldest daughter, was in an uncommon degree cordial and affectionate. Mary always spoke of this young lady in terms of the truest applause, both in relation to the eminence of her intellectual powers, and the ingenuous amiableness of her disposition. Lady Kingsborough, from the best motives, had imposed upon her daughters a variety of prohibitions, both as to the books they should read, and in many other respects. These prohibitions had their usual effects; inordinate desire for the things forbidden, and clandestine indulgence. Mary immediately restored the children to their liberty, and undertook to govern them by their affections only. The consequence was, that their indulgences were moderate, and they were uneasy under any indulgence that had

not the sanction of their governess. The salutary effects of the new system of education were speedily visible ; and lady Kingsborough soon felt no other uneasiness, than lest the children should love their governess better than their mother.

Mary made many friends in Ireland, among the persons who visited lord Kingsborough's house, for she always appeared there with the air of an equal, and not of a dependent. I have heard her mention the ludicrous distress of a woman of quality, whose name I have forgotten, that, in a large company, singled out Mary, and entered into a long conversation with her. After the conversation was over, she enquired whom she had been talking with, and found, to her utter mortification and dismay, that it was Miss King's governess.

One of the persons among her Irish acquaintance, whom Mary was accustomed to speak of with the highest respect, was Mr. George Ogle, member of parliament for the county of Wexford. She held his talents in very high estimation ; she was strongly prepossessed in favour of the goodness of his heart ; and she always spoke of him as the most perfect gentleman she had ever known. She felt the regret of a disappointed friend, at the part he has lately [2] taken in the politics of Ireland.[3]

Lord Kingsborough's family passed the summer of the year 1787 at Bristol Hot-Wells,

[2] lately] since. [3] Ireland] his country.

and had formed the project of proceeding from thence to the continent, a tour in which Mary purposed to accompany them. The plan however was ultimately given up, and Mary in consequence closed her connection with them, earlier than she otherwise had purposed to do.

At Bristol Hot-Wells she composed the little book which bears the title of Mary, a Fiction. A considerable part of this story consists, with certain modifications, of the incidents of her own friendship with Fanny. All the events that do not relate to that subject are fictitious.

This little work, if Mary had never produced any thing else, would serve, with persons of true taste and sensibility, to establish the eminence of her genius. The story is nothing. He that looks into the book only for incident, will probably lay it down with disgust. But the feelings are of the truest and most exquisite class ; every circumstance is adorned with that species of imagination, which enlists itself under the banners of delicacy and sentiment. A work of sentiment, as it is called, is too often another name for a work of affectation. He that should imagine that the sentiments of this book are affected, would indeed be entitled to our profoundest commiseration.[4]

[4] indeed be . . . commiseration.] I believe, betray a total want of sensibility and taste.

CHAPTER V

1787-1790

Being now determined to enter upon her literary plan, Mary came immediately from Bristol to the metropolis. Her conduct under this circumstance was such as to do credit both to her own heart, and that of Mr. Johnson, her publisher, between whom and herself there now commenced an intimate friendship. She had seen him upon occasion of publishing her Thoughts on the Education of Daughters, and she addressed two or three letters to him during her residence in Ireland. Upon her arrival in London in August 1787, she went immediately to his house, and frankly explained to him her purpose, at the same time requesting his advice and assistance as to its execution. After a short conversation, Mr. Johnson invited her to make his house her home, till she should have suited herself with a fixed residence. She accordingly resided at this time two or three weeks under his roof. At the same period she paid a visit or two of similar duration to some friends, at no great distance from the metropolis.[1]

[1] At the same period . . . metropolis. *del.*

At Michaelmas 1787, she entered upon a house in George street, on the Surry side of Black Friar's Bridge, which Mr. Johnson had provided for her during her excursion into the country.[2] The three years immediately ensuing, may be said, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, to have been the most active period [3] of her life. She brought with her to this habitation, the novel of Mary, which had not yet been sent to the press, and the commencement of a sort of oriental tale, entitled, the Cave of Fancy, which she thought proper afterwards to lay aside unfinished. I am told that at this period she appeared under great dejection of spirits, and filled with melancholy regret for the loss of her youthful friend. A period of two years had elapsed since the death of that friend ; but it was possibly the composition of the fiction of Mary, that renewed her sorrows in their original force. Soon after entering upon her new habitation, she produced a little work, entitled, Original Stories from Real Life, intended for the use of children. At the commencement of her literary career, she is said to have conceived a vehement aversion to the being regarded, by her ordinary acquaintance, in the character of an author, and to have employed some precautions to prevent its occurrence.

The employment which the bookseller suggested to her, as the easiest and most certain

[2] which Mr. Johnson . . . country *del.*

[3] period] part.

source of pecuniary income, of course,[4] was translation. With this view she improved herself in her French, with which she had previously but a slight acquaintance, and acquired the Italian and German languages. The greater part of her literary engagements at this time, were such as were presented to her by Mr. Johnson. She new-modelled and abridged a work, translated from the Dutch, entitled, Young Grandison: she began a translation from the French, of a book, called, the New Robinson; but in this undertaking, she was, I believe, anticipated by another translator: and she compiled a series of extracts in verse and prose, upon the model of Dr. Enfield's Speaker, which bears the title of the Female Reader; but which, from a cause not worth mentioning, has hitherto been printed with a different name in the title-page.

About the middle of the year 1788, Mr. Johnson instituted the Analytical Review, in which Mary took a considerable share. She also translated Necker on the Importance of Religious Opinions; made an abridgment of Lavater's Physiognomy, from the French, which has never been published; and compressed Salzmann's Elements of Morality, a German production, into a publication in three volumes duodecimo. The translation of Salzmann produced a correspondence between Mary and the author; and he afterwards

[4] of course *del.*

repaid the obligation to her in kind, by a German translation of the Rights of Woman. Such were her principal literary occupations, from the autumn of 1787, to the autumn of 1790.

It perhaps deserves to be remarked that this sort of miscellaneous literary employment, seems, for the time at least, rather to damp and contract, than to enlarge and invigorate, the genius. The writer is accustomed to see his performances answer the mere [5] mercantile purpose of the day, and confounded with those of persons to whom he is secretly conscious of a superiority. No neighbour mind serves as a mirror to reflect the generous confidence he felt within [6] himself; and perhaps the man never yet existed, who could maintain his enthusiasm to its full vigour, in the midst of this kind of solitariness. He is touched with the torpedo of mediocrity. I believe that nothing which Mary produced during this period, is marked with those daring flights, which exhibit themselves in the little fiction she composed just before its commencement. Among effusions of a nobler cast, I find occasionally interspersed some of [7] that homily-language, which, to speak from [8] my own feelings, is calculated to damp the moral courage it was intended to awaken.

[5] mere] merely. [6] within] in.

[7] Among effusions . . . some of] Interspersed among occasional traits of an original mind, I find a portion of.

[8] from *del.*

This is probably to be assigned to the causes above described.

I have already said that one of the purposes which Mary had conceived, a few years before, as necessary to give a [9] relish to the otherwise insipid, or embittered, draught of human life, was usefulness. On this side, the period of her existence of which I am now treating, is more brilliant, than in a literary view. She determined to apply as great a part as possible of the produce of her present employments, to the assistance of her friends and of the distressed ; and, for this purpose, laid down to herself rules of the most rigid economy. She began with endeavouring to promote the interest of her sisters. She conceived that there was no situation in which she could place them, at once so respectable and agreeable, as that of governesses in private families. She determined therefore in the first place, to endeavour to qualify them for such an undertaking. Her younger sister she sent to Paris, where she remained near two years. The elder she placed in a school near London, first as a parlour-boarder, and afterwards as a teacher. Her brother James, who had already been at sea, she first took into her house, and next sent to Woolwich for instruction, to qualify him for a respectable situation in the royal navy, where he was shortly after made a lieutenant. Charles, who was her favourite brother, had been articled

[9] a *del.*

to the eldest, an attorney in the Minories ; but not being satisfied with his situation, she effected a transfer of his indentures to another attorney,[1] and in some time after, having first placed him with a farmer for instruction, she fitted him out for America, where his speculations, founded upon the basis she had provided,[2] are said to have been extremely prosperous. The reason so much of this parental sort of [3] care fell upon her, is to be traced to the embarassed circumstances of her father.[4] His affairs having [some time before] grown too complex for himself to disentangle, he had entrusted them to the management of a near relation ; but, as they did not appear to benefit from the superintendence of their new manager, Mary about this time [5] took them into her own hands. The exertions she made, and the struggle into which she entered however, in this instance, were ultimately fruitless. To the day of her death her father was almost wholly supported by funds which she supplied to him.[6] In addition to her

[1] she effected . . . to another attorney] she removed him *1st ed.*

[2] basis she had provided] preparation thus bestowed on him.

[3] sort of *del.*

[4] is to be traced . . . her father] was, that her father had by this time considerably embarassed his circumstances. *1st ed.*

[5] but, as . . . about this time] but Mary, not being satisfied with the conduct of the business, *1st ed.*

[6] which she supplied to him.] with which she supplied him.

exertions for her own family, she took a young girl of about seven years of age under her protection and care, the niece of Mrs. John Hunter, and of the present Mrs. Skeys, for whose mother, then lately dead, she had entertained a sincere friendship.

The period, from the end of the year 1787 to the end of the year 1790, though consumed in labours of little eclat, served still further to establish her in a friendly connection from which she derived many pleasures. Mr. Johnson, the bookseller, contracted a great personal regard for her, which resembled in many respects that of a parent. As she frequented his house, she of course became acquainted with his guests. Among these may be mentioned as persons possessing her esteem, Mr. Bonnycastle, the mathematician, the late Mr. George Anderson, accountant to the board of control, Dr. George Fordyce, and Mr. Fuseli, the celebrated painter. Between both of the two latter and herself, there existed sentiments of genuine affection and friendship.

CHAPTER VI

1790-1792

HITHERTO the literary career of Mary, had for the most part, been silent ; and had been productive of income to herself, without apparently leading to the wreath of[1] fame. From this time she was destined to attract the notice of the public, and perhaps no female writer ever obtained so great a degree of celebrity throughout Europe.

It cannot be doubted that, while, for three years of literary employment, she " held the noiseless tenor of her way," her mind was insensibly advancing towards a vigorous maturity. The uninterrupted habit of composition gave a freedom and firmness to the expression of her sentiments. The society she frequented, nourished her understanding, and enlarged her mind. The French revolution, while it gave a fundamental[2] shock to the human intellect through every region of the globe, did not fail to produce a conspicuous effect in the progress of Mary's

[1] the wreath of *del.* [2] fundamental *del.*

reflections. The prejudices of her early years suffered a vehement concussion. Her respect for establishments was undermined. At this period occurred a misunderstanding upon public grounds, with one of her early friends, whose attachment to musty creeds and exploded absurdities, had been increased, by the operation of those very circumstances, by which her mind had been rapidly advanced in the race of independence.

The event, immediately introductory to the rank which from this time she held in the lists of [3] literature, was the publication of Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France. This book, after having been long promised to the world, finally made its appearance on the first of November 1790; and Mary, full of sentiments of liberty, and impressed with a warm interest in the struggle that was now going on, seized her pen in the full burst of indignation, an emotion of which she was strongly susceptible. She was in the habit of composing with rapidity, and her answer, which was [nearly] the first of the numerous ones that appeared, obtained extraordinary notice. Marked as it is with the vehemence and impetuousness of its eloquence, it is certainly chargeable with a too contemptuous and intemperate treatment of the great man against whom its attack is directed. But this circumstance was not injurious to the success of the publication. Burke had

[3] the lists of *del.*

been warmly loved by the most liberal and enlightened friends of freedom, and they were proportionably inflamed and disgusted by the fury of his assault, upon what they deemed to be its sacred cause.

Short as was the time in which Mary composed her Answer to Burke's Reflections, there was one anecdote she told me concerning it,[4] which seems worth recording in this place. It was sent to the press, as is the general[5] practice when the early publication of a piece is deemed a matter of importance,[6] before the composition was finished. When Mary had arrived at about the middle of her work, she was seized with a temporary fit of torpor and indolence, and began to repent of her undertaking. In this state of mind, she called, one evening, as she was in the practice of doing, upon her publisher, for the purpose of relieving herself by an hour or two's conversation. Here, the habitual ingenuousness of her nature, led her to describe what had just past in her thoughts. Mr. Johnson immediately, in a kind and friendly way, intreated her not to put any constraint upon her inclination, and to give herself no uneasiness about the sheets already printed, which he would cheerfully throw aside, if it would contribute to her happiness. Mary had

[4] anecdote she told me concerning it] circumstance that occurred while it was under her hands.

[5] the general] a frequent.

[6] a matter of importance] important.

wanted incentive.[7] She had expected reproach, rather than to be encouraged, in what she well knew to be unreasonable.[8] Her friend's [9] so readily falling in with her ill-humour, and seeming to expect that she would lay aside her undertaking, piqued her pride. She immediately went home ; and proceeded to the end of her work, with no other interruptions but what were absolutely indispensible.

It is probable that the applause which attended her Answer to Burke, elevated the tone of her mind. She had always felt much confidence in her own powers ; but it cannot be doubted, that the actual perception of a similar feeling respecting us in a multitude of others, must increase the confidence, and stimulate the adventure of any human being. Mary accordingly proceeded, in a short time after, to the composition of her most celebrated production, the Vindication of the Rights of Woman.

Never did any author enter into a cause, with a more ardent desire to be found, not a flourishing and empty declaimer, but an effectual champion. She considered herself as standing forth in defence of one half of the human species, labouring under a yoke which,

[7] incentive] stimulus *1st ed.*

[8] She had expected . . . unreasonable.] She had not expected to be encouraged, in what she well knew to be an unreasonable access of ideleness. *1st ed.*

[9] Her friend's] Mr. Johnson's.

through all the records of time, had degraded them from the station of rational beings, and almost sunk them to the level of the brutes. She saw indeed, that they were often attempted to be held in silken fetters, and bribed into the love of slavery; but the disguise and the treachery served only the more fully to confirm her opposition. She regarded her sex, in the language of Calista, as

"In[1] every state of life the slaves of man:"

the rich as alternately under the despotism of a father, a brother, and a husband; and the middling and the poorer classes shut out from the acquisition of bread with independence, when they are not shut out from the very means of an industrious subsistence. Such were the views she entertained of the subject; and such were the feelings with which she warmed her mind.

The work is certainly a very bold and original production. The strength and firmness with which the author repels the opinions of Rousseau, Dr. Gregory, and Dr. James Fordyce, respecting the condition of women, cannot but make a strong impression upon every ingenuous reader. The public at large formed very different opinions respecting the character of the performance. Many of the sentiments are undoubtedly of a rather masculine description. The spirited and decisive way in which the author explodes the

[1] "In] "Through.

system of gallantry, and the species of homage with which the sex is usually treated, shocked the majority. Novely produced a sentiment in their mind, which they mistook for a sense of injustice. The pretty, soft creatures that are so often to be found in the female sex, and that class of men who believe they could not exist without such pretty, soft creatures to resort to, were in arms against the author of so heretical and blasphemous a doctrine. There are also, it must be confessed, occasional passages of a stern and rugged feature, incompatible with the writer's essential [2] character. But, if they did not belong to her fixed and permanent character, they belonged to her character of the moment; [3] and what she thought, she scorned to qualify.

Yet, along with this rigid, and somewhat amazonian temper, which characterized some parts of the book, it is impossible not to remark a luxuriance of imagination, and a trembling delicacy of sentiment, which would have done honour to a poet, burning [4] with all the visions of an Armida and a Dido.

The preconceived ideas of the public were not less erroneous as to the person of the author, than those they had formed of [5] the

[2] writer's essential] true stamina of the writer's 1*st ed.*

[3] of the moment] *pro tempore* 1*st ed.*

[4] burning] bursting 1*st ed.*

[5] The preconceived . . . they had formed of] The contradiction, to the public apprehension, was equally great, as to the person of the author, as it was when they considered 1*st ed.*

temper of the book. In the champion of her sex, who was described as endeavouring to invest them with all the rights of man, those whom curiosity prompted to seek the occasion of beholding her,[6] expected to find a sturdy, muscular, raw-boned [7] virago ; and they were not a little surprised, when, instead of all this, they found a woman, lovely in her person, and in the best and most engaging sense, feminine in her manners.

The Vindication of the Rights of Woman is undoubtedly [8] a very unequal performance, and eminently deficient in method and arrangement. When tried by the hoary and long-established laws of literary composition, it can scarcely maintain its claim to be placed in the first [9] class of human [1] productions. But when we consider the importance of its doctrines, and the eminence of genius it displays, it seems not very improbable that it will be read as long as the English language endures. The publication of this book forms an epocha in the subject to which it belongs ; and Mary Wollstonecraft will perhaps here-after be found to have performed more substantial service for the cause of her sex, than all the other writers, male or female, that ever felt themselves ani-

[6] prompted to seek the occasion of beholding her] led to seek an opportunity of seeing her.

[7] sturdy, muscular raw-boned] rude, pedantic, dictatorial.

[8] undoubtedly *del.* [9] first *del.*

[1] human] finished.

mated in the behalf of oppressed and injured beauty.[2]

The censure of the liberal critic as to the defects of this performance, will be changed into astonishment, when I tell him, that a work of this inestimable moment, was begun, carried on, and finished in the state in which it now appears, in a period of no more than six weeks.

[The remainder of the story I have to relate is less literary, than personal. For the rest of her life Mary was continually occupied by a train of circumstances, which roused all the prepossessions and passions of her mind.]

It is necessary here that I should resume the subject of the friendship that subsisted between Mary and Mr. Fuseli, which proved the source of the most memorable events in her subsequent history.[3] He is a native of the republic[4] of Switzerland, but has spent the principal part of his life in the island of Great-Britain. The eminence of his genius can scarcely be disputed; it has indeed received the testimony which is the least to be suspected, that of some of the most considerable of his contemporary artists. He has one of the most striking characteristics of genius, a daring, as well as persevering, spirit of adventure. The work in which he is at present engaged, a series of pictures for

[2] in the behalf . . . beauty] by the contemplation of their oppressed and injured state.

[3] which proved . . . history *del.* [4] republic] Union.

the illustration of Milton, upon a very large scale, and produced solely upon the incitement [5] of his own mind, is a proof of this, if indeed his whole life had not sufficiently proved it.

Mr. Fuseli is one of Mr. Johnson's oldest friends, and was at this time in the habit of visiting him two or three times a week. Mary, one of whose strongest characteristics was the exquisite sensations of pleasure she felt from the associations of visible objects, had hitherto never been acquainted, or never intimately acquainted, with an eminent painter. The being thus introduced therefore to the society of Mr. Fuseli, was a high gratification to her; while he found in Mary, a person perhaps more susceptible of the emotions painting is calculated to excite, than any other with whom he ever conversed. Painting, and subjects closely connected with painting, were their almost constant topics of conversation; and they found them inexhaustible. It cannot be doubted, but [6] that this was a species of exercise very conducive to the improvement of Mary's mind.

Nothing human however is unmixed. If Mary derived improvement from Mr. Fuseli, she may also be suspected of having caught the infection of some of his faults. In early life Mr. Fuseli was ardently attached to

[5] produced solely . . . incitement] undertaken solely from the instigation.

[6] but] *del.*

literature ; but the demands of his profession have prevented him from keeping up that extensive and indiscriminate acquaintance with it, that belles-lettres [7] scholars frequently possess. [When I say this, it is by no means intended to imply, that his intercourse with the writers of established fame is not considerable, or that he is not profoundly skilled in their beauties. One consequence however of his avocations from literature is, that] [8] the favourites of his boyish years remain his only favourites. Homer is with Mr. Fuseli the abstract and deposit of every human perfection. Milton, Shakespear, and Richardson, have also engaged much of his attention.[9] The nearest rival of Homer, I believe,[1] if Homer can have a rival, is Jean Jacques Rousseau. A young man embraces entire the opinions of a favourite writer, and Mr. Fuseli has not had leisure to bring the opinions of his youth to a revision. Smitten with Rousseau's conception of the perfectness of the savage state, and the essential abortiveness [2] of all civilization, Mr. Fuseli looks at all [3] our little attempts at improvement, with a spirit that borders perhaps too much upon contempt and indifference. One of his favourite positions is the divinity of genius. This is a power that comes complete at once from

[7] belles-lettres] miscellaneous.

[8] One consequence . . . is, that] Of consequence 1*st ed.*

[9] Milton, Shakespear . . . attention *del.*

[1] I believe *del.* [2] abortiveness] futility. [3] all *del.*

the hands of the Creator of all things, and the first essays of a man of real genius are such, in all their grand and most important features, as no subsequent assiduity can amend. Add to this, that Mr. Fuseli is somewhat of a caustic turn of mind, with much wit, and a disposition to search, in every thing new or modern, for occasions of censure. I believe Mary came something more a cynic out of the school of Mr. Fuseli, than she went into it.

But the principal circumstance that relates to the intercourse of Mary, and this celebrated artist, remains to be told. She saw Mr. Fuseli frequently ; he amused, delighted and instructed her. As a painter, it was impossible she should not wish to see his works, and consequently to frequent his house. She visited him ; her visits were returned. Notwithstanding the inequality of their years, Mary was not of a temper to live upon terms of so much intimacy with a man of merit and genius, without loving him. The delight she enjoyed in his society, she transferred by association to his person. What she experienced in this respect, was no doubt heightened, by the state of celibacy and restraint in which she had hitherto lived, and to which the rules of polished society condemn an unmarried woman. She conceived a personal and ardent affection for him. Mr. Fuseli was a married man, and his wife the acquaintance of Mary. She readily perceived the restrictions which this circumstance seemed

to impose upon her ; but she made light of any difficulty that might arise out of them. Not that she was insensible to the value of domestic endearments between persons of an opposite sex, but that she scorned to suppose, that she could feel a struggle, in conforming to the laws she should lay down to her conduct.

There cannot perhaps be a properer place than the present, to state her principles upon this subject, such at least as they were when I knew her best. She set a great value on a mutual affection between persons of an opposite sex. She regarded it as the principal solace of human life. It was her maxim, "that the imagination should awaken the senses, and not the senses the imagination." In other words, that whatever related to the gratification of the senses, ought to arise, in a human being of a pure mind, only as the consequence of an individual affection. She regarded the manners and habits of the majority of our sex in that respect, with strong disapprobation. She conceived that true virtue would prescribe the most entire celibacy, exclusively of affection, and the most perfect fidelity to that affection when it existed. —There is no reason to doubt that, if Mr. Fuseli had been disengaged at the period of their acquaintance, he would have been the man of her choice. As it was, she conceived it both practicable and eligible, to cultivate a distinguishing affection for him, and to foster it by the endearments of personal intercourse

and a reciprocation of kindness, without departing in the smallest degree from the rules she prescribed to herself.[4]

In September 1791, she removed from the house she occupied in George-street, to a large[5] and commodious apartment in Store street, Bedford-square. She began to think that she had been too rigid, in the laws of frugality and self-denial with which she set out in her literary career; and now added to the neatness and cleanliness which she had always scrupulously observed, a certain degree of elegance, and those temperate indulgences in furniture and accommodation, from which a sound and uncorrupted taste never fails to derive pleasure.

It was in the month of November in the same year (1791),[6] that the writer of this narrative was first in company with the person to whom it relates.[7] He dined with her at a friend's, together with Mr. Thomas Paine and one or two other persons. The invitation was of his own seeking, his object being to see the author of the Rights of Man, with whom he had never before conversed.

The interview was not fortunate. Mary and myself parted, mutually displeased with each other. I had not read her Rights of Woman. I had barely looked into her Answer

[4] What she experienced . . . to herself. *see Passages Rewritten.*

[5] large and *del.* [6] (1791), *del.*

[7] the person to whom it relates] her who is the subject of it

to Burke, and been displeased, as literary men are [8] apt to be, with a few offenses against grammar and other minute points of composition. I had therefore little curiosity to see Mrs. Wollstonecraft, and a very [9] great curiosity to see Thomas Paine. Paine, in his general habits, is no great talker; and, though he threw in occasionally some shrewd and striking remarks, the conversation lay principally between me and Mary. I, of consequence, heard her, very frequently when I wished to hear Paine.

We touched on a considerable variety of topics, and particularly on the characters and habits of certain eminent men. Mary, as has already been observed, had acquired in a very blameable degree,[1] the practice of seeing every thing [2] on the gloomy side, and bestowing censure with a plentiful hand, where circumstances were in any respect [3] doubtful. I, on the contrary, had a strong propensity, to favourable construction, and particularly, where I found unequivocal marks of genius, strongly to incline to the supposition of generous and manly virtues. We ventilated [4] in this way the characters of Voltaire and others, who have obtained from some individuals an ardent admiration, while the greater number have treated them with

[8] literary men are] men of leisure and reading are too.
[9] very *del.* [1] in a very blameable degree *del.*
[2] seeing every thing] looking.
[3] in any respect] perhaps only. [4] ventilated] discussed.

extreme moral severity. Mary was at last provoked to tell me, that praise, lavished in the way that I lavished it, could do no credit either to the commended or the commender. We discussed [5] some questions on the subject of religion, in which her opinions approached much nearer to the received ones, than mine. As the conversation proceeded, I became dissatisfied with the tone of my own share in it. We touched upon [6] all topics, without treating forcibly and connectedly upon [7] any. Meanwhile, I did her the justice, in giving an account of the conversation to a party in which I supped, though I was not sparing of my blame, to yield to her the praise of a person of active and independent thinking. On her side, she did me no part of what perhaps I considered as justice.

We met two or three times in the course of the following year, but made a very small degree of progress towards a cordial acquaintance.

In the close of the year 1792, Mary went over to France, where she continued to reside for upwards of two years. One of her principal inducements to this step, related, I believe, to Mr. Fuseli. She had, at first, considered it as reasonable and judicious, to cultivate what I may be permitted to call, a Platonic affection for him; but she did not, in the sequel, find all the satisfaction in this plan, which she had originally expected from

[5] discussed] touched upon.

[6] touched upon] mentioned. [7] upon] of.

it. It was in vain that she enjoyed much pleasure in his society, and that she enjoyed it frequently. Her ardent imagination was continually conjuring up pictures of the happiness she should [8] have found, if fortune had favoured their more intimate union. She felt herself formed for domestic affection, and all those tender charities, which men of sensibility have constantly treated as the dearest band of human society. General conversation and society could not satisfy her. She felt herself alone, as it were, in the great mass of her species; and she repined when she reflected, that the best years of her life were spent in this comfortless solitude. These ideas made the cordial intercourse of Mr. Fuseli, which had at first been one of her greatest pleasures, a source of perpetual torment to her. She conceived it necessary to snap the chain of this association in her mind; and, for that purpose, determined to seek a new climate, and mingle in different scenes.

It is singular, that during her residence in Store-street, which lasted more than twelve months, she produced nothing, except a few articles in the Analytical Review. Her literary meditations were chiefly employed upon the sequel to the Rights of Woman; but she has scarcely left behind her a single paper, that can, with any [9] certainty, be assigned to have had this destination.

[8] should] would. [9] any *del.*

CHAPTER VII

1792-1795

The original plan of Mary, respecting her residence in France, had no precise limit[1] in the article of duration; the single purpose she had in view being that of an endeavour to heal her distempered mind. She did not proceed so far as even to discharge her lodging in London; and, to some friends who saw her immediately before her departure, she spoke merely of an absence of six weeks.

It is not to be wondered at, that her excursion did not originally seem to produce the effects she had expected from it. She was in a land of strangers; she had no acquaintance; she had even to acquire the power of receiving and communicating ideas with facility in the language of the country. Her first residence was in a spacious mansion to which she had been invited, but the master of which (monsieur Fillietaz) was absent at the time of her arrival. At first therefore she found herself surrounded only with servants. The gloominess[2] of her mind communicated

[1] limit] limits 1*st ed.* [2] gloominess] gloom.

its own colour to the objects she saw ; and in this temper she began a series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation, one of which she forwarded to her publisher, and which appears in the collection of her posthumous works. This performance she soon after discontinued ; and it is, as she justly remarked,[3] tinged with the saturnine temper which at that time pervaded her mind.

Mary carried with her introductions to several agreeable families in Paris. She renewed her acquaintance with Paine. There also subsisted a very sincere friendship between her and Helen Maria Williams, author of a collection of poems of uncommon merit, who at that time resided in Paris. Another person, of whom Mary always spoke [4] in terms of ardent commendation, both for the excellence of his disposition and the force of his genius, was a count Slabrendorf, by birth, I believe, a Swede. It is almost unnecessary to mention, that she was personally acquainted with the majority of the leaders in the French revolution. [Her country, combined with her known political sentiments, recommended her ; and the celebrity of her writings had prepared the way for her personal reception.]

But the house that, I believe, she principally frequented at this time, was that of Mr.

[3] remarked] remarks 1*st ed.*

[4] of whom Mary always spoke] whom Mary always spoke of, 1*st ed.*

Thomas Christie, a person whose pursuits were mercantile, and who had written a volume on the French revolution. With Mrs. Christie her acquaintance was more intimate [5] than with her husband.

It was about four months after her arrival at Paris in December 1792,[6] that she entered into that species of [7] connection for which her heart secretly panted,[8] from which the tranquillity and the sorrows of the immediately succeeding years of her life were solely derived.[9] The person with whom it was formed (for it would be an idle piece of delicacy [1] to attempt to suppress a name, which is known to every one whom the reputation of Mary has reached), was Mr. Gilbert Imlay,[2] native of the United States of North America.

The place at which she first saw Mr. Imlay was at the house of Mr. Christie; and it perhaps deserves to be noticed, that the emotions he then excited in her mind, were, I am told, those of dislike, and that, for some time, she shunned all occasions of meeting him. This sentiment however speedily gave place to one of greater kindness.

[5] acquaintance was more intimate] intercourse was greater.

[6] in December, 1792 *del.* [7] species of *del.*

[8] for which her heart secretly panted *del.*

[9] from which the tranquillity . . . derived.] and which had the effect of diffusing an immediate tranquillity and cheerfulness over her manners. 1*st ed.*

[1] delicacy] forbearance in this place.

[2] Mr. Imlay] this person.

Previously to the partiality she conceived for him, she [3] had determined upon a journey to Switzerland, induced chiefly by motives of economy. But she had some difficulty in procuring a passport; and it was probably the intercourse that now originated [4] between her and Mr. Imlay,[5] that [finally] changed her purpose, and led her to prefer a lodging at Neuilly, a village three miles from Paris. Her habitation here was a solitary house in the midst of a garden, with no other inhabitants [6] than herself and the gardener, an old man, who performed for her many of the offices of a domestic, and would sometimes contend for the honour of making her bed. The gardener had a great veneration for his guest, and would set before her, when alone, some grapes of a particularly fine sort, which she could not without the greatest difficulty obtain [of him] when she had any person with her as a visitor. Here it was that she conceived, and for the most part executed, her Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution,* into which, as she observes, are [7] incorporated most of the observations she had collected for her Letters, and which was written with more sobriety and cheerfulness

[3] him, she] Mr. Imlay, Mary.

[4] that now originated] which now occurred.

[5] between her and Mr. Imlay *del.*

[6] inhabitants] inhabitant. [7] as she observes, are] she

* No part of the proposed continuation of this work, has been found among the papers of the author.

than the tone in which they had been commenced. In the evening she was accustomed to refresh herself by a walk in a neighbouring wood, from which her old [8] host in vain endeavoured to dissuade her, by recounting divers horrible robberies and murders that had been committed there.

In the commencement of the attachment she now formed, Mary [9] had neither confident nor adviser. She always conceived it to be a gross breach of delicacy to have any confidant in a matter of this sacred nature, an affair of the heart.[1] The origin of the connection was about the middle of April 1793, and it was carried on in a private manner for four months. At the expiration of that period a circumstance occurred that induced her to declare it. The French convention, exasperated at the conduct of the British government, particularly in the affair of Toulon, formed a decree against the citizens of this country, by one article of which the English, resident in France, were ordered into prison till the period of a general peace. Mary had objected to a marriage with Mr. Imlay, who, at the time their connection was formed, had no property whatever; because she would not involve him in certain family embarrass-

[8] old *del.*

[9] In the commencement . . . now formed, Mary] The commencement of the attachment Mary now formed, 1*st ed.*

[1] She always conceived . . . of the heart.] Delicacy, she thought, required the making an intercourse of this sort sacred and confidential.

ments to which she conceived herself exposed, or make him answerable for the pecuniary demands that existed against her. She however considered their engagement as of the most sacred [2] nature ; and they had mutually formed the plan of emigrating to America, as soon as they should have realized a sum, enabling them to do it in the mode they desired. The decree however [3] that I have just mentioned, made it necessary, not that a marriage should actually take place, but that Mary should take the name of Imlay, which, from the nature of their connection [(formed, on her part at least, with no capricious or fickle design)], she conceived herself entitled to do, and obtain a certificate from the American ambassador, as the wife of a native of that country.

Their engagement being thus avowed, they thought proper to reside under the same roof, and for that purpose removed to Paris.

Mary was now [4] arrived at the situation, which, for two or three preceding years, her reason had pointed out to her as affording the most substantial prospect of happiness. She had been tossed and agitated by the waves of misfortune. Her childhood, as she often said, had known few of the endearments, which constitute the principal happiness of childhood. The temper of her father had

[2] sacred] inviolable.

[3] The decree however] Meanwhile the decree.

[4] was now] now thought herself.

early given to her mind a severe cast of thought, and substituted the inflexibility of resistance for the confidence of affection. The cheerfulness of her entrance upon womanhood, had been darkened, by an attendance upon the death-bed of her mother, and the still more [5] afflicting calamity of her eldest sister. Her exertions to create a joint independence for her sisters and herself, had been attended, neither with the success, nor the pleasure, she had hoped from them. Her first youthful passion, her friendship for Fanny, had encountered many disappointments, and, in fine, a melancholy and premature catastrophe. Soon after these accumulated mortifications, she was engaged in a contest with a near relation, whom she regarded as unprincipled, respecting the wreck of her father's fortune. In this affair she suffered the double pain, which arises from moral indignation, and disappointed benevolence. Her exertions to assist almost every member of her family, were great and unremitted. Finally, when she indulged a romantic affection for Mr. Fuseli, and fondly imagined that she should find in it the solace of her cares, she perceived too late, that, by continually impressing on her mind fruitless images of unreserved affection and domestic felicity, it only served to give new pungency to the sensibility that was destroying her.

Some persons may be inclined to observe,

[5] still more *del.*

that the evils here enumerated, are not among the heaviest in the catalogue of human calamities. But evils take their rank less from their own nature, than from the temper of the mind that suffers them.[6] Upon a man of a hard and insensible disposition, the shafts of misfortune often [7] fall pointless and impotent. There are persons, by no means hard and insensible, who, from an elastic and sanguine turn of mind, are continually prompted to look on the fair side of things, and, having suffered one fall, immediately rise again, to pursue their course, with the same eagerness, the same hope, and the same [8] gaiety, as before. On the other hand, we not unfrequently meet with persons, endowed with the most exquisite and delicious [9] sensibility, whose minds seem almost of too fine [1] a texture to encounter the vicissitudes of human affairs, to whom pleasure is transport, and disappointment is agony indescribable. This character is finely pourtrayed by the author of the Sorrows of Werter. Mary was in this respect a female Werter.

She brought then, in the present instance, a wounded and sick heart, to take refuge in the bosom [2] of a chosen friend. Let it not however be imagined, that she brought a

[6] less from . . . suffers them.] more from the temper of the mind that suffers them, than from their abstract nature. *1st ed.*

[7] often *del.* [8] the same *del.* [9] delicious] refined.

[1] fine] delicate. [2] bosom] attachment.

heart, querulous, and ruined in its taste for pleasure. No ; her whole character seemed to change with a change of fortune. Her sorrows, the depression of her spirits, were forgotten, and she assumed all the simplicity and the vivacity of a youthful mind. She was like a serpent upon a rock, that casts its slough, and appears again with the brilliancy, the sleekness, and the elastic activity of its happiest age.[3] She was playful, full of confidence, kindness and sympathy. Her eyes assumed new lustre, and her cheeks new colour and smoothness. Her voice became chearful ; her temper overflowing with universal kindness ; and that smile of bewitching tenderness from day to day illuminated her countenance, which all who knew her will so well recollect, and which won, both heart and soul, the affection of almost every one that beheld it.

Mary now reposed herself upon a person, of whose honour and principles she had the most exalted idea. She nourished an individual[4] affection, which she saw no necessity of subjecting to restraint ; and a heart like hers was not formed to nourish affection by halves. Her conception of Mr. Imlay's " tenderness and worth had twisted him closely round her heart ; " and she " indulged the thought, that she had thrown out some tendrils, to cling to the elm by which she wished to be supported."

[3] She was like a serpent . . . its happiest age. *del.*

[4] individual *del.*

This was "talking a new language to her;" but "conscious that she was not a parasite-plant," she was willing to encourage and foster the luxuriances of affection.[5] Her confidence was entire; her love was unbounded.[6] Now, for the first time in her life, she gave a loose to all the sensibilities of her nature.

[It might be considered as a trite remark, if I were to observe here, that the highest pleasures of human life are nearly connected with its bitterest sorrows, and that the being who restlessly aspires to superior gratifications, has some reason to fear, lest his refinement should be a precursor to anguish and repentance. Influenced by this anticipation, there are persons who resolutely circumscribe themselves within the sphere of a rigid and miserable separation from others, that they may be independent of their injustice or folly. But this is a sordid policy. The mistake of Mary in this instance is easy of detection. She did not give full play to her judgment in this most important choice of life. She was too much under the influence of the melancholy and disappointment which had driven her from her native land; and, gratified with the first gleam of promised relief, she ventured not to examine with too curious a research into the soundness of her expectation. The least that can be said of the connection that she now formed, is, that it was a very unequal

[5] Her conception of . . . of affection. *del.*

[6] Her love was unbounded *del.*

one. In years the parties were a match for each other; in every other point they were ill fitted for so entire an intimacy.]

Soon after the time to which my narrative has reached,[7] her attachment to Mr. Imlay [8] gained a new link, by [her] finding reason to suppose herself with child.

Their establishment [9] at Paris, was however broken up [1] almost as soon as formed,[2] by the circumstance of Mr. Imlay's entering into [3] business, urged, as he said, by the prospect of a family, and this being a favourable crisis in French affairs for commercial speculations. The pursuits in which he was engaged,[4] led him in the month of September to Havre de Grace, then called Havre Marat, probably to superintend the shipping of goods, in which he was jointly engaged with some other person or persons. Mary remained in the capital.

The solitude in which she was now left, proved an unexpected trial. Domestic affections constituted the object upon which her heart was fixed; and she early felt, with an inward grief, that Mr. Imlay "did not attach those tender emotions round the idea of home, which, every time they recurred, dimmed her

[7] to which my narrative has reached] I am now speaking of 1*st ed.*

[8] her attachment to Mr. Imlay] the attachment of Mary.

[9] Their establishment] The establishment she had formed.

[1] up *del.* [2] formed] entered on.

[3] entering into] engaging in.

[4] in which he was engaged] into which he entered.

eyes with moisture." She had expected his return from week to week, and from month to month; but a succession of business still continued to detain him at Havre. At the same time the sanguinary character which the government of France began every day [more decidedly] to assume, contributed to banish tranquillity from the first months of her pregnancy. Before she left Neuilly, she happened one day to enter Paris on foot (I believe, by the *Place de Louis Quinze*), when an execution, attended with some peculiar aggravations, had just taken place, and the blood of[5] the guillotine appeared fresh upon the pavement. The emotions of her soul burst forth in indignant exclamations, while a prudent bystander warned her of her danger, and intreated her to hasten and hide her discontents. She described to me, more than once, the anguish she felt at hearing of the death of Brissot, Vergniaud, and the twenty deputies, as one of the most intolerable sensations she had ever experienced.

Finding the return of Mr. Imlay continually postponed, she determined, in January 1794, to join him at Havre. One motive that influenced her, though, I believe, by no means the principal, was the growing cruelties of Robespierre, and the desire she felt to be in any other place, rather than the devoted city, in the midst of which they were perpetrated.

From January to September, Mr. Imlay and

[5] of] from.

Mary lived together, with great harmony, at Havre, where the child, with which she was pregnant, was born, on the fourteenth of May, and named Frances, in remembrance of the dear friend of her youth, whose image could never be erased from her memory.

In September, Mr. Imlay took his departure from Havre for the port of London. As this step was said to be necessary in the way of business, he endeavoured to prevail upon Mary to quit Havre, and once more take up her abode at Paris. Robespierre was now no more, and, of consequence, the only objection she had to residing in the capital, was removed. Mr. Imlay was already in London, before she undertook her journey, and it proved the most fatiguing journey [6] she ever made; the carriage, in which she travelled, being overturned no less than four times between Havre and Paris.

This absence, like that of the preceding year in which Mr. Imlay had removed to Havre, was represented [by him] as an absence that was to have a short duration. In two months he was once [7] again to join her in Paris. It proved however the prelude to an eternal separation. The agonies of such a separation, or rather desertion, great as Mary would have found them upon every supposition, were vastly increased, by the lingering method in which it was effected, and the ambiguity that, for a long time, hung

[6] journey *del.* [7] once *del.*

upon it. This circumstance produced the effect, of holding her mind, by force, as it were, to the most painful of all subjects, and not suffering her to derive the just advantage from the energy and elasticity of her character.

The procrastination of which I am speaking was however productive of one advantage. It put off the evil day. She did not suspect the calamities that awaited her, till the close of the year. She gained an additional three months of comparative happiness. But she purchased it at a very dear rate. Perhaps no human creature ever suffered greater misery, than dyed the whole year 1795, in the life of this incomparable woman. It was wasted in that sort of despair, to the sense of which the mind is continually awakened, by a glimmering of fondly cherished, expiring hope.

Why did she thus obstinately cling to an ill-starred unhappy passion ? [8] Because it is of the very essence of affection, to seek to perpetuate itself. He does not love, who can resign this cherished sentiment, without suffering some of the sharpest struggles that our nature is capable of enduring. Add to this, Mary had fixed her heart upon this chosen friend ; and one of the last impressions a worthy mind can submit to receive, is that of the worthlessness of the person upon whom it has fixed all [9] its esteem. Mary had struggled

[8] an ill-starred unhappy passion] a passion, at once ill-assorted, and unpromising.

[9] fixed all] placed.

to entertain a favourable opinion of human nature; she had unweariedly fought for a kindred mind, in whose integrity and fidelity to take up her rest. [Wounded affection, wounded pride, all those principles which hold most absolute empire in the purest and loftiest minds, urged her to still further experiments to recover her influence, and to a still more poignant desperation, long after reason would have directed her to desist, and resolutely call off her mind from thoughts of so hopeless and fatal a description.] Mr. Imlay undertook to prove, in his letters written immediately after their complete separation, that his conduct towards her was reconcilable to the strictest rectitude; but undoubtedly Mary was of a different opinion. Whatever the reader may decide in this respect, there is one sentiment that, I believe, he will unhesitatingly admit: that of pity for the mistake of the man, who, being in possession of such a friendship and attachment as those of Mary, could hold them at a trivial price, and, "like the base Indian, throw a pearl away, richer than all his tribe.*"

* A person, from whose society at this time Mary derived particular gratification,[1] was Archibald Hamilton Rowan, who had lately become a fugitive from Ireland, in consequence of a political prosecution, and in whom she found those qualities which were always eminently engaging to her, great integrity of disposition, and great kindness of heart.

[1] from whose society at this time Mary derived particular gratification] whom Mary saw frequently about this time.

CHAPTER VIII

1795-1796

In April 1795, Mary returned once more to London, being requested to do so by Mr. Imlay, who even sent a servant to Paris to wait upon her in the journey, before she could complete the necessary arrangements for her departure. But, notwithstanding these favourable appearances, she came to England with a heavy heart, not daring, after all the uncertainties and anguish she had endured, to trust to the suggestions of hope.

The gloomy forebodings of her mind, were but too faithfully verified. Mr. Imlay had already formed another connection; as it is said, with a young actress from a strolling company of players. His attentions therefore to Mary were formal and constrained, and she probably had but little of his society. This alteration could not escape her penetrating glance.[1] He ascribed it to pressure of business, and some pecuniary embarrassments which, at that time, pressed upon[2] him; it

[1] penetrating glance *del.*

[2] pressed upon] occurred to 1*st ed.*

was of little consequence to Mary what was the cause. She saw, but too well, though she strove not to see, that his affections were lost to her for ever.

It is impossible to imagine a period of greater pain and mortification than Mary passed, for about seven weeks, from the sixteenth of April to the sixth of June, in a furnished house that Mr. Imlay had provided for her. She had come over to England, a country for [3] which she, at this time, expressed "a repugnance, that almost amounted to horror," in search of happiness. She feared that that happiness had altogether escaped her; but she was encouraged by the eagerness and impatience which Mr. Imlay at length seemed to manifest for her arrival. When she saw him, all her fears were confirmed. What a picture was she capable of forming to herself, of the overflowing kindness of a meeting, after an interval of so much anguish and apprehension! A thousand images of this sort were present to her burning imagination. It is in vain, on such occasions, for reserve and reproach to endeavour to curb in [4] the emotions of an affectionate heart. But the hopes she nourished were speedily blasted. Her reception by Mr. Imlay was cold and embarrassed. Discussions ("explanations" they were called) followed; cruel explanations, that only added to the anguish of a heart already overwhelmed in grief! They had

[3] for] to. [4] in *del.*

small pretensions indeed to explicitness; but they sufficiently told, that the case admitted not of remedy.

Mary was incapable of sustaining her equanimity in this pressing emergency. "Love, dear, delusive love!" as she expressed herself to a friend some time afterwards, "rigorous reason had forced her to resign; and now her rational prospects were blasted, just as she had learned to be contented with rational enjoyments." Thus situated, life became an intolerable burthen. While she was absent from Mr. Imlay, she could talk of purposes of separation and independence. But, now that they were in the same house, she could not withhold herself from endeavours to revive their mutual cordiality; and unsuccessful endeavours continually added fuel to the fire that destroyed her. She formed a desperate purpose to die.

This part of the story of Mary is involved in considerable obscurity. I only know, that Mr. Imlay became acquainted with her purpose, at a moment when he was uncertain whether or no it were [5] already executed, and that his feelings were roused by the intelligence. It was perhaps owing to his activity and representations, that her life, was, at this time, saved. She determined to continue to exist.[6] Actuated by this purpose, she took a resolution, worthy both of the strength and affectionateness of her mind. Mr. Imlay was

[5] or no it were] it was. [6] exist] live.

involved in a question of considerable difficulty, respecting a mercantile adventure in Norway. It seemed to require the presence of some very [7] judicious agent, to conduct the business to its desired termination. Mary determined to make the voyage, and take the business into her own hands. Such a voyage seemed the most desireable thing [8] to recruit her health, and, if possible, her spirits, in the present crisis. It was also gratifying to her feelings, to be employed in promoting the interest of a man, from whom she had experienced such severe unkindness, but to whom she ardently desired to be reconciled. The moment of desperation I have mentioned, occurred in the close of May, and, in about a week after, she set out upon this new expedition.

The narrative of this voyage is before the world, and perhaps a book of travels that so irresistably seizes on the heart, never, in any other instance, found its way from the press. The occasional harshness and ruggedness of character, that diversify her Vindication of the Rights of Woman, here totally disappear. If ever there was a book calculated to make a man in love with its author, this appears to me to be the book. She speaks of her sorrows, in a way that fills us with melancholy, and dissolves us in tenderness, at the same time that she displays a genius which commands

[7] very] particularly.

[8] the most desireable thing] well calculated.

all our admiration. Affliction had tempered her heart to a softness almost more than human; and the gentleness of her spirit seems precisely to accord with all the romance of unbounded attachment.[9]

Thus softened[1] and improved, thus fraught with imagination and sensibility, with all, and more than all, "that youthful poets fancy, when they love,"[2] she returned to England, and, if he had so pleased, to the arms of her lover.[3] Her return was hastened by the ambiguity, to her apprehension, of Mr. Imlay's conduct. He had promised to meet her upon her return from Norway,[4] probably at Hamburgh; and they were then to pass some time in Switzerland. The style however of his letters to her during her tour, was not such as to inspire confidence; and she wrote to him very urgently, to explain himself, relative to the footing upon which they were hereafter to stand to each other. In his answer, which reached her at Hamburgh, he treated her questions as "extraordinary and unnecessary," and desired her to be at the pains to decide for herself. Feeling herself unable to accept this as an explanation, she instantly determined to sail for London by the very first opportunity, that she might thus bring to a

[9] Affliction had tempered . . . attachment *del.*

[1] softened] awakened.

[2] with all, and more . . . they love," *del.*

[3] and, if he . . . lover. *del.*

[4] return from Norway] journey home.

termination the suspense that preyed upon her soul.

It was not long after her arrival in London in the commencement of October, that she attained the certainty she sought. Mr. Imlay procured her a lodging. But the neglect she experienced from him after she entered it, flashed conviction upon her, in spite of his asseverations. She made further inquiries, and at length was informed by a servant, of the real state of the case. Under the immediate shock which the painful certainty gave her, her first impression was to repair to him at the ready-furnished house he had provided for his new mistress. [The characteristic of her mind upon all trying occasions, was energy; but it was a concentrated energy, active in resolution, and not the unresisting slave of feeling; disdaining to waste itself in the empty war of words; and never hurried into any thing incompatible with the elevation of her character.] What was the particular nature of their conference I am unable to relate. It is sufficient to say that the wretchedness of the night which succeeded this fatal discovery, impressed her with the feeling, that she would sooner suffer a thousand deaths, than pass another of equal misery.

The agony of her mind determined her; and that determination gave her a sort of[5] desperate serenity. She resolved to plunge

[5] sort of *del.*

herself in the Thames ; and, not being satisfied with any spot nearer to London, she took a boat, and rowed to Putney.[6] Her first thought had led her to Battersea-bridge, but she found it too public, [and accordingly proceeded further up the river.] It was night when she arrived at Putney, and by that time it had begun to rain with great violence. The rain suggested to her the idea of walking up and down the bridge, till her clothes were thoroughly drenched and heavy with the wet, which she did for half an hour without meeting a human being. She then leaped [7] from the top of the bridge, but still seemed to find a difficulty in sinking, which she endeavoured to counteract by pressing her clothes closely round her. After some time she became insensible ; but she always spoke of the pain she underwent as such, that, though she could afterwards have determined upon almost any other species of voluntary death, it would have been impossible for her to resolve upon encountering the same sensations again. I am doubtful, whether this is to be ascribed to the mere nature of suffocation, or was not rather owing to the preternatural action of a desperate spirit.

[How strange is the condition of our nature ! The whole scene of human life may at last be pronounced a delusion ! Speculation for ever

[6] and, not being satisfied . . . rowed to Putney.] and took a boat for that purpose.

[7] leaped] threw herself.

deceives us, and is the appropriate office of castle-builders; but the active concerns of life cheat us still more! Mary was in the first instance mistaken in the object of her attachment, imputing to him qualities which, in the trial, proved to be imaginary. By insensible degrees she proceeded to stake her life upon the consequences of her error: and, for the disappointment of this choice, for a consideration so foreign to the true end of her powers and cultivation, she was willing to consign those powers and that cultivation, pregnant as they were with pleasure to herself and gratification to others, formed to adorn society, and give a relish the most delicate and unrivalled to domestic life, as well as, through the medium of the press, to delight, instruct, and reform mankind—she was willing, I say, to consign all these to premature destruction! How often is the sagacity of our moral judgment reserved for the hour of meditation, and how little does it sometimes bestead us in the time of our greatest need!]

After having been for a considerable time insensible, Mary [8] was recovered by the exertions of those by whom she was taken from the water.[9] She had sought, with cool and deliberate firmness, to put a period to her existence, and yet she lived to have every prospect of a long possession of enjoyment

[8] Mary] she 1*st ed.*

[9] she was taken from the water.] the body was found. 1*st ed.*

and happiness. It is perhaps not an unfrequent case with suicides, that we find reason to suppose, if they had survived their gloomy purpose, that they would, at a subsequent period, have been considerably happy. It arises indeed, in some measure, out of the very nature of a spirit of self-destruction; which implies a degree of anguish, that the constitution of the human mind will not suffer to remain long undiminished. This is a serious reflection. Probably no man would destroy himself from an impatience of present pain, if he felt a moral certainty that there were years of enjoyment still in reserve for him. It is perhaps a futile attempt, to think of reasoning with a man in that state of mind which precedes suicide. Moral reasoning is nothing but the awakening of certain feelings; and the feelings by which he is actuated, is too strong to leave us much chance of impressing him with other feelings, that should have force enough to counter-balance it. But, if the prospect of future tranquillity and pleasure cannot be expected to have much weight with a man under an immediate purpose of suicide, it is so much the more to be wished, that men would impress their minds, in their sober moments, with a conception, which, being rendered habitual, seems to promise to act as a successful antidote in a paroxysm of desperation.

The present situation of Mary, of necessity produced some further intercourse between

her and Mr. Imlay. He sent a physician to her; and Mrs. Christie, at his desire, prevailed on her to remove to her house in Finsbury-square. In the mean time Mr. Imlay assured her that his present was merely a casual, sensual connection; and, of course, fostered in her mind the idea that it would be once more in her choice to live with him. With whatever intention the idea was suggested, it was certainly calculated to increase the agitation of her mind. In one respect however it produced an effect unlike that which might most obviously have been looked for. It roused within her the characteristic energy of mind, which she seemed partially to have forgotten. She saw the necessity of bringing the affair to a point, and not suffering months and years to roll on in uncertainty and suspence. This idea inspired her with an extraordinary resolution. The language she employed, was, in effect, as follows: "If we are ever to live together again, it must be now. We meet now, or we part for ever. You say, You cannot abruptly break off the connection you have formed. It is unworthy of my courage and character, to wait the uncertain issue of that connection. I am determined to come to a decision. I consent then, for the present, to live with you, and the woman to whom you have associated yourself. I think it important that you should learn habitually to feel for your child the affection of a father. But, if you reject this proposal,

here we end. You are now free. We will correspond no more. We will have no intercourse of any kind. I will be to you as a person that is dead."

The proposal she made, extraordinary and injudicious as it was, was at first accepted; and Mr. Imlay took her accordingly, to look at a house he was upon the point of hiring, that she might judge whether it was calculated to please her. Upon second thoughts however he retracted his concession.

In the following month, Mr. Imlay, and the woman with whom he was at present connected, went to Paris, where they remained three months. Mary had, previously to this, fixed herself in a lodging in Finsbury-place, where, for some time, she saw scarcely any one but Mrs. Christie, for the sake of whose neighbourhood she had chosen this situation; "existing," as she expressed it, "in a living tomb, and her life but an exercise of fortitude, continually on the stretch."

Thus circumstanced, it was unavoidable for her thoughts to brood upon a passion, which all that she had suffered had not yet been able to extinguish. Accordingly, as soon as Mr. Imlay returned to England, she could not restrain herself from making another effort, and desiring to see him once more. "During his absence, affection had led her to make numberless excuses for his conduct," and she probably wished to believe that his present connection was, as he represented it, purely

of a casual nature. To this application, she observes, that " he returned no other answer, except declaring, with unjustifiable passion, that he would not see her."

This answer, though, at the moment, highly irritating to Mary, was not the ultimate end[1] of the affair. Mr. Christie was connected in business with Mr. Imlay, at the same time that the house of Mr. Christie was the only one at which Mary habitually visited. The consequence of this was, that, when Mr. Imlay[2] had been already more than a fortnight in town, Mary called at Mr. Christie's one evening, at a time when Mr. Imlay was in the parlour. The room was full of company. Mrs. Christie heard Mary's voice in the passage,[3] and hastened to her, to intreat her not to make her appearance.[4] Mary however was not to be controlled. She thought, as she afterwards told me, that it was not consistent with conscious rectitude, that she should shrink, as if abashed, from the presence of one by whom she deemed herself injured. Her child was with her. She entered ; and, in a firm manner, immediately led up the child, now near two years of age, to the knees of its father. [While she sought relief for the anguish of her mind, the mother was still uppermost in her gestures and manner ; and

[1] end] close.

[2] Mr. Imlay] he. [3] passage] hall.

[4] intreat her not to make her appearance.] prevent her from entering.

the appeal her action appeared to make, or rather the sentence it inforced, would, one would have thought, have proved irresistible.] Mr. Imlay [5] retired with Mary into another apartment, and promised to dine with her at her lodging, I believe, the next day.

In the interview which took place in consequence of this appointment, he expressed himself to her in friendly terms, and in a manner calculated to sooth her despair. Though he could conduct himself,[6] when absent from her, in a way which she censured as unfeeling ; this species of sternness constantly expired when he came into her presence. Mary was prepared at this moment to catch at every phantom of happiness ; and the gentleness of his carriage, was to her as a sun-beam, awakening the hope of returning day. For an instant she gave herself up to delusive visions ; and, even after the period of delirium expired, she still dwelt, with an aching eye, upon the air-built and unsubstantial prospect of a reconciliation.

At his particular request, she retained the name of Imlay, which, a short time before, he had seemed to dispute with her. "It was not," as she expresses herself in a letter to a friend, "for the world that she did so—not in the least—but she was unwilling to cut the Gordian knot, or tear herself away in appearance, when she could not in reality."

The day after this interview, she set out

[5] Mr. Imlay] he 1*st ed.* [6] conduct himself,] act.

upon a visit to the country,[7] where she spent nearly the whole of the month of March. It was, I believe, while she was upon this visit, that some epistolary communication with Mr. Imlay, induced her resolutely to expel from her mind, all remaining doubt as to the issue of the affair.

Mary was now aware that every demand of forbearance towards him, of duty to her child, and even of indulgence to her own deep-rooted predilection, was discharged. She determined to rouse herself, and cast off for ever an attachment, which to her had been a spring of inexhaustible bitterness. Her present residence among the scenes of nature, was favourable to this purpose. She was at the house of an old and intimate friend, a lady of the name of Cotton, whose partiality for her was strong and sincere. Mrs. Cotton's nearest neighbour was Sir William East, baronet; and, from the joint effect of the kindness of her friend, and the hospitable and distinguishing attentions of this respectable family, she derived considerable benefit.[8] She had been amused and interested in her journey to Norway; but with this difference, that, at that time, her mind perpetually returned with trembling anxiety to conjectures respecting Mr. Imlay's future conduct, whereas now, with a lofty and undaunted spirit, she threw aside every thought that recurred to him, while

[7] the country] Berkshire.

[8] She was at the house . . . considerable benefit. *del.*

she felt herself called upon to make one more effort for life and happiness.

Once after this, to my knowledge, she saw Mr. Imlay; probably, not long after her return to town. They met by accident upon the New Road; he alighted from his horse, and walked with her for some time; and the rencounter passed, as she assured me, without producing in her any oppressive emotion.

Be it observed, by the way, and I may be supposed best to have known the real state of the case, she never spoke of Mr. Imlay [9] with acrimony, and was displeased when any person,[1] in her hearing, expressed contempt of him. She was characterised by a strong sense of indignation; but her emotions of this sort, [however great might be the provocation that roused them,] were short-lived, and in no long time subsided into a dignified sereneness and equanimity.

The question of her connection with Mr. Imlay,[2] as we have seen, was not completely dismissed, till March 1796. But it is worthy to be observed, that she did not, like ordinary persons under extreme anguish of mind, suffer her understanding, in the mean time, to sink into littleness and debility. The most inapprehensive reader may conceive what was the mental torture she endured, when he considers, that she was twice, with an interval of four months, from the end of May to the

[9] Mr. Imlay] this person. [1] person] one.

[2] her connection with Mr. Imlay] their connection.

beginning of October, prompted by it to purposes of suicide. Yet in this period she wrote her Letters from Norway. Shortly after its expiration she prepared them for the press, and they were published in the close of that year. In January 1796, she finished the sketch [3] of a comedy, which turns, in the serious scenes, upon the incidents of her own story. It was offered to both the winter-managers, and [4] remained among her papers at the period of her decease ; but it appeared to me to be in so crude and imperfect a state, that I judged it most respectful to her memory to commit it to the flames. To understand this extraordinary degree of activity, we must recollect however the entire solitude, in which most of her hours at that time were consumed.

[3] sketch] draught.

[4] was offered to both the winter-managers, and *del.*

CHAPTER IX

1796-1797

I AM now led, by the progress of the story, to the last branch of her history, the connection between Mary and myself. And this I shall relate with the same simplicity that has pervaded every other part of my narrative. If there ever were any motives of prudence or delicacy, that could impose a qualification upon the story, they are now over. They could have no relation but to factitious rules of decorum. There are no circumstances of her life, that, in the judgment of honour and reason, could brand her with disgrace. [She had errors; but her errors, which were not those of a sordid mind, were connected and interwoven with the qualities most characteristic of her disposition and genius.] Never did there exist a human being, that needed, with less fear, expose all their actions, and call upon the universe to judge them. An event of the most deplorable sort, has awfully imposed silence upon the gabble of frivolity.

We renewed our acquaintance in January 1796, but with no particular effect, except so far as sympathy in her anguish, added in my

mind to the respect I had always entertained for her talents. It was in the close of that month that I read her Letters from Norway; and the impression that book[1] produced upon me has been already related.

It was on the fourteenth of April that I first saw her after her excursion into Berkshire. On that day she called upon me in Somers Town, she having, since her return, taken a lodging in Cumming-street, Pentonville, at no great distance from the place of my habitation. From that time our intimacy increased, by regular, but almost imperceptible degrees.[2]

[Her visit, it seems, is to be deemed a deviation from etiquette; but she had through life trampled on those rules which are built on the assumption of the imbecility of her sex; and had trusted to the clearness of her spirit for the direction of her conduct, and to the integrity of her views for the vindication of her character. Nor was she deceived in her trust. If, in the latter part of her life, she departed from the morality of vulgar minds too decidedly to be forgiven by its abettors, be it remembered that, till this offense was given, calumny itself had not dared to utter an insinuation against her.]

The partiality we conceived for each other, was in that mode, which I have always regarded as the purest and most refined

[1] that book] they.

[2] From that time our intimacy . . . imperceptible degrees. *del.*

style of love. It grew with equal advances in the mind of each. It would have been impossible for the most minute observer to have said who was before, and who was after. One sex did not take the priority which long-established custom has awarded it, nor the other overstep that delicacy which is so severely imposed. I am not conscious that either party can assume to have been the agent or the patient, the toil-spreader or the prey, in the affair.[3] When, in the course of things, the disclosure came, there was nothing, in a manner, for either party to disclose to the other.

In July 1796 I made an excursion into the county of Norfolk, which occupied nearly the whole of that month. During this period Mary removed, from Cumming-street, Pentonville, to Judd-place West, which may be considered as the extremity of Somers Town. In the former situation, she had occupied a furnished lodging. She had meditated a tour to Italy or Switzerland, and knew not how soon she should set out with that view. Now however she felt herself reconciled to a longer abode in England, probably without exactly knowing why this change had taken place in her mind. She had a quantity of furniture locked up at a broker's ever since her residence in Store-street, and she now found it adviseable to bring it into use. This circumstance occasioned her present removal.

[3] in the affair *del.*

The temporary separation attendant on my little journey, had its effect on the mind of both parties. It gave a space for the maturing of inclination. I believe that, during this interval, each furnished to the other the principal topic of solitary and daily contemplation. Absence bestows a refined and aerial delicacy upon affection, which it with difficulty acquires in any other way. The sentiment produced,[4] seems to resemble the communication of spirits, without the medium, or the impediment, of this earthly frame.

When we met again, we met with new pleasure, and, I may add, with a more decisive preference for each other. It was however three weeks longer, before the sentiment which trembled upon the tongue, burst from the lips of either. There was, as I have already said, no period of throes and resolute explanation attendant on the tale. It was friendship melting into love. Previously to our mutual declaration, each felt half-assured, yet each felt a certain trembling[5] anxiety to have assurance complete.

[The sort of connection of which I am here speaking, between parties of whom the intercourse of mind, and not sordid and casual gratification, is the object proposed, is certainly the most important choice in the departments of private life.] Mary rested

[4] The sentiment produced,] It *1st ed.*

[5] trembling *del.*

her head upon the shoulder of her lover,[6] hoping [7] to find a heart with which she might safely treasure her world of affection ; fearing to commit a mistake, yet, in spite of her melancholy experience, fraught with that generous confidence, which, in a great soul,[8] is never extinguished. I had never loved till now ; or, at least, had never nourished a passion to the same growth, or met with an object so consummately worthy.

We did not marry. It is difficult to recommend any thing to indiscriminate adoption, contrary to the established rules and prejudices of mankind ; but certainly nothing can be so ridiculous upon the face of it, or so contrary to the genuine march of sentiment, as to require the overflowing of the soul to wait upon a ceremony, and that at which, wherever delicacy and imagination exist, is of all things most sacredly private, to blow a trumpet before it, and to record the moment when it has arrived at its climax.[9]

[6] rested her head upon the shoulder of her lover, *del.*

[7] hoping] trusted.

[8] great soul] liberal spirit.

[9] We did not marry . . . its climax.] We did not immediately marry. Ideas which I am now willing to denominate prejudices, made me by no means eager to conform to a ceremony as an individual, which, coupled with the conditions our laws annex to it, I should undoubtedly, as a citizen, be desirous to abolish. Fuller examination however has since taught me to rank this among those cases, where an accurate morality will direct us to comply with customs and institutions, which, if we had had a voice in their introduction, it would have been incumbent on us to negative.

There were however other reasons why we did not immediately marry. Mary[1] felt an entire conviction of the propriety of her conduct [in forming this connection]. It would be absurd to suppose that, with a heart withered by desertion, she was not right to give way to the emotions of kindness which our intimacy produced, and to seek for that support in friendship and affection, which could alone give pleasure to her heart, and peace to her meditations. It was only about six months since she had resolutely banished every thought of Mr. Imlay; but it was at least eighteen that he ought to have been banished, and would have been banished, had it not been for her scrupulous pertinacity in determining to leave no measure untried to regain him. Add to this, that the laws of etiquette ordinarily laid down in these cases, are essentially absurd, and that the sentiments of the heart cannot submit to be directed by the rule and square.[2] But Mary[3] had an extreme aversion to be made the topic of vulgar discussion; and, if there be any weakness in this, the dreadful trials through which she had recently passed, may well plead in[4] its excuse. She felt that she had been too much, and too rudely spoken of, in the former

[1] There were . . . marry. Mary] The motives of Mary, were not precisely those which influenced my judgment. She.

[2] It was only about six months . . . rule and square. *del.*

[3] Mary] she.

[4] in *del.*

instance; and she could not resolve to do any thing that should immediately revive that painful topic.

For myself, it is certain that I had for many years regarded marriage with so well-grounded an apprehension, that, notwithstanding the partiality for Mary that had taken possession of my soul, I should have felt it very difficult, at least in the present stage of our intercourse, to have resolved on such a measure. Thus, partly from similar, and partly from different motives, we felt alike in this, as we did perhaps in every other circumstance that related to our intercourse.[5]

I have nothing further that I find it necessary to record, till the commencement of April 1797. We then judged it proper to declare our marriage, which had taken place a little before. The principal motive for complying with this ceremony, was the circumstance of Mary being in a state of pregnancy. She was unwilling, and perhaps with reason, to incur that exclusion from the society of many valuable and excellent individuals, which custom awards in cases of this sort. I should have felt an extreme repugnance to the having caused her such an inconvenience. And, after the experiment of seven months of as intimate an intercourse as our respective modes of living would admit, there was certainly less hazard to either, in the subjecting ourselves to those consequences which the

[5] For myself . . . intercourse. *del.*

laws of England annex to the relations of husband and wife. On the sixth of April we entered into possession of a house, which had been taken by us in concert.

In this place I have a very curious circumstance to notice, which I am happy to have occasion to mention, as it tends to expose certain regulations of polished society, of which the absurdity vies with the odiousness. Mary had long possessed the advantage of an acquaintance with many persons of genius, and with others whom the effects of an intercourse with elegant society, combined with a certain portion of information and good sense, sufficed to render amusing companions. She had lately extended the circle of her acquaintance in this respect ; and her mind, trembling between the opposite impressions of past anguish and renovating tranquillity, found ease in this species of recreation. Wherever Mary appeared, admiration attended upon [6] her. She had always displayed talents for conversation ; but maturity of understanding, her travels, her long residence in France, the discipline of affliction, and the smiling, newborn peace which awaked a corresponding smile in her animated countenance, inexpressibly increased them. The way in which the story of Mr. Imlay was treated in these polite circles, was probably the result of the partiality she excited. These elegant personages were divided between their cautious

[6] upon *del.*

adherence to forms, and the desire to seek their own gratification. Mary made no secret of the nature of her connection with Mr. Imlay; and in one instance, I well know, she put herself to the trouble of explaining it to a person totally indifferent to her, because he never failed to publish every thing he knew, and, she was sure, would repeat her explanation to his numerous acquaintance. She was of too proud and generous a spirit to stoop to hypocrisy. These persons however, in spite of all that could be said, persisted in shutting their eyes, and pretending they took her for a married woman.

Observe the consequence of this! While she was, and constantly professed to be, an unmarried mother; she was fit society for the squeamish and the formal. The moment she acknowledged herself a wife, and that by a marriage perhaps unexceptionable,[7] the case was altered. Mary and myself, ignorant as we were of these elevated refinements, supposed that our marriage would place her upon a surer footing in the calendar of polished society, than ever. But it forced these people to see the truth, and to confess their belief of what they had carefully been told; and this they could not forgive. Be it remarked, that the date of our marriage had nothing to do with this, that question being never once mentioned during this period. Mary indeed had, till now, retained the name

[7] and that by a marriage perhaps unexceptionable, *del.*

of Imlay which had first been assumed from necessity in France; but its being retained thus long, was purely from the awkwardness that attends the introduction of a change, and not from an apprehension of consequences of this sort. Her scrupulous explicitness as to the nature of her situation, surely sufficed to make the name she bore perfectly immaterial.

It is impossible to relate the particulars of such a story, but in the language of contempt and ridicule. A serious reflection however upon the whole, ought to awaken emotions of a different sort. Mary retained the most numerous portion of her acquaintance, and the majority of those whom she principally valued. It was only the supporters and the subjects of the unprincipled manners of a court, that she lost. This however is immaterial. The tendency of the proceeding, strictly considered, and uniformly acted upon, would have been to proscribe her from all valuable society. And who was the person proscribed? The firmest champion, and, as I strongly suspect, the greatest ornament her sex ever had to boast! A woman, with sentiments as pure, as refined, and as delicate, as ever inhabited a human heart! It is fit that such persons should stand by, that we may have room enough for the dull and insolent dictators, the gamblers and demireps of polished society.

Two of the persons, the loss of whose acquaintance Mary principally regretted upon

this occasion, were Mrs. Inchbald and Mrs. Siddons. Their acquaintance, it is perhaps fair to observe, is to be ranked among her recent acquisitions. Mrs. Siddons, I am sure, regretted the necessity, which she conceived to be imposed on her by the peculiarity of her situation, to conform to the rules I have described. She is endowed with that rich and generous sensibility, which should best enable its possessor completely to feel the merits of her deceased friend. She very truly observes, in a letter now before me, that the Travels in Norway were read by no one, who was in possession of " more reciprocity of feeling, or more deeply impressed with admiration of the writer's extraordinary powers."

Mary felt a transitory pang, when the conviction reached her of so unexpected a circumstance, that was rather exquisite. But she disdained to sink under the injustice (as this, when traced to its source will be found to be) [8] of the supercilious and the foolish, and presently shook off the impression of the first surprize. That once subsided, I well knew that the event was thought of, with no emotions, but those of superiority to the injustice she sustained; and was not of force enough to diminish a happiness, which seemed hourly to become more vigorous and firm.

I think I may venture to say, that no two persons ever found in each other's society, a

[8] as this, when traced . . . will be found to be] as this ultimately was *1st ed.*

satisfaction more pure and refined. What it was in itself, can now only be known, in its full extent, to the survivor. But, I believe, the serenity of her countenance, the increasing sweetness of her manners, and that consciousness of enjoyment that seemed ambitious that every one she saw should be happy as well as herself, were matters of general observation to all her acquaintance. She had always possessed, in an unparalleled degree, the art of communicating happiness, and she was now in the constant and unlimited [9] exercise of it. She seemed to have attained that situation, which her disposition and character imperiously demanded, but which she had never before attained; and her understanding and her heart felt the benefit of it.

While we lived as near neighbours only, and before our last removal, her mind had attained considerable tranquillity, and was visited but seldom with [1] those emotions of anguish, which had been but too familiar to her. But the improvement in this respect, which accrued upon our removal and establishment, was extremely obvious. She was a worshipper of domestic life. She loved to observe the growth of affection between me and her daughter, then three years of age, as well as my anxiety respecting the child not yet born. Pregnancy itself, unequal as the decree of nature seems to be in this respect, is

[9] and unlimited *del.* [1] with] by.

the source of a thousand endearments. No one knew better than Mary how to extract sentiments of exquisite delight, from trifles, which a suspicious and formal wisdom would scarcely deign to remark. A little ride into the country with myself and the child, has sometimes produced a sort of [2] opening of the heart, a general expression of confidence and affectionate soul, a sort of infantile, yet dignified endearment, which those who have felt may understand, but which I should in vain attempt to pourtray.

In addition to our domestic pleasures, I was fortunate enough to introduce her to some of my acquaintance of both sexes, to whom she attached herself with all the ardour of approbation and friendship.

Ours was not an idle happiness, a paradise of selfish and transitory pleasures. It is perhaps scarcely necessary to mention, that, influenced by the ideas I had long entertained upon the subject of cohabitation, I engaged an apartment, about twenty doors from our house in the Polygon, Somers Town, which I designed for the purpose of my study and literary occupations. Trifles however will be interesting to some readers, when they relate to the last period of the life of such a person as Mary. I will add therefore, that we were both of us of opinion, that it was possible for two persons to be too uniformly in each other's society. Influenced by that opinion,

[2] a sort of] an.

it was my practice to repair to the apartment I have mentioned as soon as I rose, and frequently not to make my appearance in the Polygon, till the hour of dinner. We agreed in condemning the notion, prevalent in many situations in life, that a man and his wife cannot visit in mixed society, but in company with each other; and we rather sought occasions of deviating from, than of complying with, this rule. By these means, though, for the most part, we spent the latter half of each day in one another's society, yet we were in no danger of satiety. We seemed to combine, in a considerable degree, the novelty and lively sensation of a visit, with the more delicious and heart-felt pleasures of domestic life.

Whatever may be thought, in other respects, of the plan we laid down to ourselves, we probably derived a real advantage from it, as to the constancy and uninterruptedness of our literary pursuits. Mary had a variety of projects of this sort, for the exercise of her talents, and the benefit of society; and, if she had lived, I believe the world would have had very [3] little reason to complain of any remission of her industry. One of her projects, which has been already mentioned, was of a series of Letters on the Management of Infants. Though she had been for some time digesting her views [4] on this subject with a view to the press, I have found comparatively nothing that she had committed to

[3] very *del.* [4] views] ideas.

paper respecting it. Another project, of longer standing, was of a series of books for the instruction of children. A fragment she left in execution of this project, is inserted in her Posthumous Works.

But the principal work, in which she was engaged for more than twelve months before her decease, was a novel, entitled, The Wrongs of Woman. I shall not stop here to explain the nature of the work, as so much of it as was already written, is now given to the public. I shall only observe that, impressed, as she could not fail to be, with the consciousness of her talents, she was desirous, in this instance, that they should effect what they were capable of effecting. She was sensible how arduous a task it is to produce a truly excellent novel; and she roused her faculties to grapple with it. All her other works were produced with a rapidity, that did not give her powers time fully to expand. But this was written slowly and with mature consideration. She began it in several forms, which she successively rejected, after they were considerably advanced. She wrote many parts of the work again and again, and, when she had finished [5] what she intended for the first part, she felt herself more urgently stimulated to revise and improve what she had written, than to proceed, with constancy of application, in the parts that were to follow.

[5] finished] gone through.

CHAPTER X

I AM now led, by the course of my narrative, to the last fatal scene of her life. She was taken in labour on Wednesday, the thirtieth of August. She had been somewhat indisposed on the preceding Friday, the consequence, I believe, of a sudden alarm. But from that time she was in perfect health. She was so far from being under any apprehension as to the difficulties of child-birth, as frequently to ridicule the fashion of ladies in England, who keep their chamber for one full month after delivery. For herself, she proposed coming down to dinner on the day immediately following. She had already had some experience on the subject in the case of Fanny ; and I cheerfully submitted in every point to her judgment and her wisdom. She hired no nurse. Influenced by ideas of decorum, which certainly ought to have no place, at least in cases of danger, she determined to have a woman to attend her in the capacity of midwife. She was sensible that the proper business of a midwife, in the instance of a natural labour, is to sit by and wait for the operations

of nature, which seldom, in these affairs, demand the interposition of art.

At five o'clock in the morning of the day of delivery, she felt what she conceived to be some notices of the approaching labour. Mrs. Blenkinsopp, matron and midwife to the Westminster Lying-in Hospital, who had seen Mary several times previous to her delivery, was soon after sent for, and arrived about nine. During the whole day Mary was perfectly cheerful. Her pains came on slowly; and, in the morning, she wrote several notes, three addressed to me, who had gone, as usual, to my apartments, for the purpose of study. About two o'clock in the afternoon, she went up to her chamber,—never more to descend.

The child was born at twenty minutes after eleven at night. Mary had requested that I would not come into the chamber till all was over, and signified her intention of then performing the interesting office of presenting the new-born child to its father. I was sitting in a parlour; and it was not till after two o'clock on Thursday morning, that I received the alarming intelligence, that the placenta was not yet removed, and that the midwife dared not proceed any further, and gave her opinion for calling in a male practitioner. I accordingly went for Dr. Poignand, physician and man-midwife to the same hospital, who arrived between three and four hours after the birth of the child. He immediately pro-

ceeded to the extraction of the placenta, which he brought away in pieces, till he was satisfied that the whole was removed. In that point however it afterwards appeared that he was mistaken.

The period from the birth of the child till about eight o'clock the next morning, was a period full of peril and alarm. The loss of blood was considerable, and produced an almost uninterrupted series of fainting fits. I went to the chamber soon after four in the morning, and found her in this state. She told me some time on Thursday, "that she should have died the preceding night, but that she was determined not to leave me." She added, with one of those smiles which so eminently illuminated her countenance, "that I should not be like Porson," alluding to the circumstance of that great man having lost his wife, after being only a few months married. Speaking of what she had already passed through, she declared, "that she had never known what bodily pain was before."

On Thursday morning Dr. Poignand repeated his visit. Mary had just before expressed some inclination to see Dr. George Fordyce, a man probably of more science than any other medical professor in England, and between whom and herself there had long subsisted a mutual friendship. I mentioned this to Dr. Poignand, but he rather discountenanced the idea, observing that he saw no necessity for it, and that he supposed

Dr. Fordyce was not particularly conversant with obstetrical cases ; but that I would do as I pleased. After Dr. Poignand was gone, I determined to send for Dr. Fordyce. He accordingly saw the patient about three o'clock on Thursday afternoon. He however perceived no particular cause of alarm ; and, on that or the next day, quoted, as I am told, Mary's case, in a mixed company, as a corroboration of a favourite idea of his, of the propriety of employing females in the capacity of midwives. Mary "had had a woman, and was doing extremely well."

What had passed however in the night between Wednesday and Thursday, had so far alarmed me, that I did not quit the house, and scarcely the chamber, during the following day. But my alarms wore off, as time advanced. Appearances were more favourable, than the exhausted state of the patient would almost have permitted me to expect. Friday morning therefore I devoted to a business of some urgency, which called me to different parts of the town, and which, before dinner, I happily completed. On my return, and during the evening, I received the most pleasurable sensations from the promising state of the patient. I was now perfectly satisfied that every thing was safe, and that, if she did not take cold, or suffer from any external accident, her speedy recovery was certain.

Saturday was a day less auspicious than Friday, but not absolutely alarming.

Sunday, the third of September, I now regard as the day, that finally decided on the fate of the object dearest to my heart that the universe contained. Encouraged by what I considered as the progress of her recovery, I accompanied a friend in the morning in several calls, one of them as far as Kensington, and did not return till dinner-time. On my return I found a degree of anxiety in every face, and was told that she had had a sort of shivering fit, and had expressed some anxiety at the length of my absence. My sister and a friend of hers, had been engaged to dine below stairs, but a message was sent to put them off, and Mary ordered that the cloth should not be laid, as [had been] usual, in the room immediately under her on the first floor, but in the ground-floor parlour. I felt a pang at having been so long and so unseasonably absent, and determined that I would not repeat the fault.

In the evening she had a second shivering fit, the symptoms of which were in the highest degree alarming. Every muscle of the body trembled, the teeth chattered, and the bed shook under her. This continued probably for five minutes. She told me, after it was over, that it had been a struggle between life and death, and that she had been more than once, in the course of it, at the point of expiring. I now apprehend these to have been the symptoms of a decided mortification, occasioned by the part of the placenta that

remained in the womb. At the time however I was far from considering it in that light. When I went for Dr. Poignand, between two and three o'clock on the morning of Thursday, despair was in my heart. The fact of the adhesion of the placenta was stated to me; and, ignorant as I was of obstetrical science, I felt as if the death of Mary was in a manner decided. But hope had re-visited my bosom; and her chearings were so delightful, that I hugged her obstinately to my heart. I was only mortified at what appeared to me a new delay in the recovery I so earnestly longed for. I immediately sent for Dr. Fordyce, who had been with her in the morning, as well as on the three preceding days. Dr. Poignand had also called this morning, but declined paying any further visits, as we had thought proper to call in Dr. Fordyce.

The progress of the disease was now uninterrupted. On Tuesday I found it necessary again to call in Dr. Fordyce in the afternoon, who brought with him Dr. Clarke of New Burlington-street, under the idea that some operation might be necessary. I have already said, that I pertinaciously persisted in viewing the fair side of things; and therefore the interval between Sunday and Tuesday evening, did not pass without some mixture of cheerfulness. On Monday, Dr. Fordyce forbad the child's having the breast, and we therefore procured puppies to draw off the milk. This occasioned some pleasantry of

Mary with me and the other attendants. Nothing could exceed the equanimity, the patience and affectionateness of the poor sufferer, I intreated her to recover; I dwelt with trembling fondness on every favourable circumstance; and, as far as it was possible in so dreadful a situation, she, by her smiles and kind speeches, rewarded my affection.

Wednesday was to me the day of greatest torture in the melancholy series. It was now decided that the only chance of supporting her through what she had to suffer, was by supplying her rather freely with wine. This task was devolved upon me. I began about four o'clock in the afternoon. But for me, totally ignorant of the nature of diseases and of the human frame, thus to play with a life that now seemed all that was dear to me in the universe, was too dreadful a task. I knew neither what was too much, nor what was too little. Having begun, I felt compelled, under every disadvantage, to go on. This lasted for three hours. Towards the end of that time, I happened foolishly to ask the servant who came out of the room, "What she thought of her mistress?" she replied, "that, in her judgment, she was going as fast as possible." There are moments, when any creature that lives, has power to drive one into madness. I seemed to know the absurdity of this reply; but that was of no consequence. It added to the measure of my distraction. A little after seven I intreated a friend to go for Mr.

Carlisle and bring him instantly wherever he was to be found. He had voluntarily called on the patient on the preceding Saturday, and two or three times since. He had seen her that morning, and had been earnest in recommending the wine-diet. That day he dined four miles out of town, on the side of the metropolis, which was furthest from us. Notwithstanding this, my friend returned with him after three-quarters of an hour's absence. No one who knows my friend, will wonder either at his eagerness or success, when I name Mr. Basil Montagu. The sight of Mr. Carlisle thus unexpectedly, gave me a stronger alleviating sensation, that I thought it possible to experience.

Mr. Carlisle left us no more from Wednesday evening, to the hour of her death. It was impossible to exceed his kindness and affectionate attention. It excited in every spectator a sentiment like adoration. His conduct was uniformly tender and anxious, ever upon the watch, observing every symptom, and eager to improve every favourable appearance. If skill or attention could have saved her, Mary would still live.

In addition to Mr. Carlisle's constant presence, she had Dr. Fordyce and Dr. Clarke every day. She had for nurses, or rather for friends, watching every occasion to serve her, Mrs. Fenwick, author of an excellent novel, entitled Secrecy, another very kind and judicious lady, and a favourite female servant.

I was scarcely ever out of the room. Four friends, Mr. Fenwick, Mr. Basil Montagu, Mr. Marshal, and Mr. Dyson, sat up nearly the whole of the last week of her existence in the house, to be dispatched, on any errand, to any part of the metropolis, at a moment's warning.

Mr. Carlisle being in the chamber, I retired to bed for a few hours on Wednesday night. Towards morning he came into my room with an account that the patient was surprisingly better. I went instantly into the chamber. But I now sought to suppress every idea of hope. The greatest anguish I have any conception of, consists in that crushing of a new-born hope which I had already two or three times experienced. If Mary recovered, it was well, and I should see it time enough. But it was too mighty a thought to bear being trifled with, and turned out and admitted in this abrupt way.

I had reason to rejoice in the firmness of my gloomy thoughts, when, about ten o'clock on Thursday evening, Mr. Carlisle told us to prepare ourselves, for we had reason to expect the fatal event every moment. To my thinking, she did not appear to be in that state of total exhaustion, which I supposed to precede death ; but it is probable that death does not always take place by that gradual process I had pictured to myself ; a sudden pang may accelerate his arrival. She did not die on Thursday night.

Till now it does not appear that she had any serious thoughts of dying; but on Friday and Saturday, the two last days of her life, she occasionally spoke as if she expected it. This was however only at intervals; the thought did not seem to dwell upon her mind. Mr. Carlisle rejoiced in this. He observed, and there is great force in the suggestion, that there is no more pitiable object, than a sick man, that knows he is dying. The thought must be expected to destroy his courage, to co-operate with the disease, and to counteract every favourable effort of nature.

On these two days her faculties were in too decayed a state, to be able to follow any train of ideas with force or any accuracy of connection. Her religion, as I have already shown, was not calculated to be the torment of a sick bed; and, in fact, during her whole illness, not one word of a religious cast fell from her lips.

She was affectionate and compliant to the last. I observed on Friday and Saturday nights, that, whenever her attendants recommended to her to sleep, she discovered her willingness to yield, by breathing, perhaps for the space of a minute, in the manner of a person that sleeps, though the effort, from the state of her disorder, usually proved ineffectual.

She was not tormented by useless contradiction. One night the servant, from an error in judgment teazed her with idle expostula-

tions, but she complained of it grievously, and it was corrected. "Pray, pray, do not let her reason with me," was her expression. Death itself is scarcely so dreadful to the enfeebled frame, as the monotonous importunity of nurses everlastingly repeated.

Seeing that every hope was extinct, I was very desirous of obtaining from her any directions, that she might wish to have followed after her decease. Accordingly, on Saturday morning, I talked to her for a good while of the two children. In conformity to Mr. Carlisle's maxim of not impressing the idea of death, I was obliged to manage my expressions. I therefore affected to proceed wholly upon the ground of her having been very ill, and that it would be some time before she could expect to be well; wishing her to tell me any thing that she would choose to have done respecting the children, as they would now be principally under my care. After having repeated this idea to her in a great variety of forms, she at length said, with a significant tone of voice, "I know what you are thinking of," but added, that she had nothing to communicate to me upon the subject.

The shivering fits had ceased entirely for the two last days. Mr. Carlisle observed that her continuance was almost miraculous, and he was on the watch for favourable appearances, believing it highly improper to give up all hope, and remarking, that perhaps one

SAINT PANCRAS CHURCHYARD

Where Mary Wollstonecraft was buried, September 15, 1797

(From a painting)

in a million, of persons in her state might possibly recover. I conceive that not one in a million, unites so good a constitution of body and of mind.

These were the amusements of persons in the very gulph of despair. At six o'clock on Sunday morning, September the tenth, Mr. Carlisle called me from my bed to which I had retired at one, in conformity to my request, that I might not be left to receive all at once the intelligence that she was no more. She expired at twenty minutes before eight.

. . . . . .

Her remains were deposited, on the fifteenth of September, at ten o'clock in the morning, in the church-yard of the parish church of St. Pancras, Middlesex. A few of the persons she most esteemed, attended the ceremony; and a plain monument is now erecting[1] on the spot, by some of her friends, with the following inscription:

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT GODWIN,
Author of
A VINDICATION
OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN:
Born 27 April, 1759:
Died 10 September, 1797.

. . . . . .

The loss of the world in this admirable woman, I leave to other men to collect; my

[1] is now erecting] has been erected.

own I well know, nor can it be improper to describe it. I do not here allude to the personal[2] pleasures I enjoyed in her conversation: these increased every day, in proportion as we knew each other better, and as our mutual confidence increased. They can be measured only by the treasures of her mind, and the virtues of her heart. But this is a subject for meditation, not for words. What I purposed alluding to, was the improvement that I have for ever lost.

We had cultivated our powers (if I may venture to use this sort of language) in different directions; I chiefly an attempt at logical and metaphysical distinction, she a taste for the picturesque. One of the leading passions of my mind has been an anxious desire not to be deceived. This has led me to view the topics of my reflection on all sides; and to examine and re-examine without end, the questions that interest me.

But it was not merely (to judge at least from all the reports of my memory in this respect) the difference of propensities, that made the difference in our intellectual habits. I have been stimulated, as long as I can remember, by an ambition for intellectual distinction; but, as long as I can remember, I have been discouraged, when I have endeavoured to cast the sum of my intellectual value, by finding that I did not possess, in the degree of some other men, an intuitive

[2] personal *del.*

perception of intellectual beauty. I have perhaps a strong and lively sense of the pleasures of the imagination; but I have seldom been right in assigning to them their proportionate value, but by dint of persevering examination, and the change and correction of my first opinions.

What I wanted in this respect, Mary possessed, in a degree superior to any other person I ever knew. The strength of her mind lay in intuition. She was often right, by this means only, in matters of mere speculation. Her religion, her philosophy, (in both of which the errors were comparatively few, and the strain dignified and generous) were, as I have already said, the pure result of feeling and taste. She adopted one opinion, and rejected another, spontaneously, by a sort of tact, and the force of a cultivated imagination; and yet, though perhaps, in the strict sense of the term, she reasoned little, it is surprising what a degree of soundness is to be found in her determinations. But, if this quality was of use to her in topics that seem the proper province of reasoning, it was much more so in matters directly appealing to the intellectual taste. In a robust and unwavering judgment of this sort, there is a kind of witchcraft; when it decides justly, it produces a responsive vibration in every ingenuous mind. In this sense, my oscillation and scepticism were fixed by her boldness. When a true opinion emanated in this way from

another mind, the conviction produced in my own assumed a similar character, instantaneous and firm. This species of intellect probably differs from the other, chiefly in the relation of earlier and later. What the one perceives instantaneously (circumstances having produced in it, either a premature attention to objects of this sort, or a greater boldness of decision) the other receives only by degrees. What it wants, seems to be nothing more than a minute attention to first impressions, and a just appreciation of them; habits that are never so effectually generated, as by the daily recurrence of a striking example.

This light was lent to me for a very short period, and is now extinguished for ever!

While I have described the improvement I was in the act of receiving, I believe I have put down the leading traits of her intellectual character.[3]

[3] We had cultivated our powers . . . her intellectual character. *see Passages Rewritten.*

THE END.

PASSAGES REWRITTEN IN THE SECOND EDITION

[pp. 58-62.]

To understand this, we have only to recollect how dear to persons of sensibility is the exercise of the affections. A sound morality requires that "nothing human should be regarded by us with indifference;" but it is impossible that we should not feel the strongest interest for those persons, whom we know most intimately, and whose welfare and sympathies are united to our own. True wisdom will recommend to us individual attachments; for with them our minds are more thoroughly maintained in activity and life than they can be under the privation of them, and it is better that man should be a living being, than a stock or a stone. True virtue will sanction this recommendation, since it is the object of virtue to produce happiness, and since the man who lives in the midst of domestic relations, will have many opportunities of conferring pleasure, minute in the detail, yet not trivial in the amount, without interfering with the purposes of general benevolence. Nay, by kindling his sensibility, and harmonizing his soul, they

may be expected, if he is endowed with a liberal and manly spirit, to render him more prompt in the service of strangers and of the public.

But, in the catalogue of domestic charities, there are none so capable of affording strong and permanent delight, as that of two persons of opposite sexes who have conceived a preference for each other. Human beings differ so much in their tempers and views, that, except in cases of a tender attachment, cohabitation brings with it small prospect of harmony and happiness. The connection between parents and children, between grown persons and young, is of too unequal a nature ; and is bounded and restrained by a sense of responsibility on the one side, and the inattention and heedlessness particularly incident to the other. The charm of domestic life consists in a mutual desire to study each other's gratification ; and this can scarcely subsist in sufficient force, but in this particular connection.

Mary had now lived for upwards of thirty years in a state of celibacy and seclusion. As her sensibilities were exquisitely acute, she had felt this sort of banishment from social charities, so frequent in a state of high civilization and refinement, more painfully than persons in general are likely to feel it. Or rather, as I believe, she suffered occasional accesses of uneasiness, torpor, and vacuity, without having clearly traced the sources and

remedy of the evil. She was like what we are told of those lofty and aspiring genuises, who, being formed for busy scenes and daring projects, find the activity of their temper, when debarred its proper field, corroding and preying upon itself. The sentiments which Mr. Fuseli excited in her mind, taught her the secret, to which she was so long in a manner a stranger.

Let it not however be imagined, that this was any other than the dictate of a most refined sentiment, and the simple deduction of morality and reason. Never was there a woman on the face of the earth more alien to that mire and grossness, in which the sensual part of our species are delighted to wallow. Superior at the same time to the idleness of romance, and the pretense of an ideal philosophy, no one knew more perfectly how to assign to the enjoyments of affection their respective rank, or to maintain in virgin and unsullied purity the chasteness of her mind.

It happened in the present case that Mr. Fuseli was already married ; and, in visiting at his house, his wife became the acquaintance of Mary. Mary did not disguise from herself how desirable it would have been, that the man in whom she discovered qualities calling forth all the strength of her attachment, should have been equally free with herself. But she chearfully submitted to the empire of circumstances. She conceived it practicable

to cultivate a distinguishing affection, and to foster it by the endearments of personal intercourse and reciprocation of kindness, without departing from the consideration due to his previous engagements. She scorned to suppose, that she could feel a struggle, in conforming to the laws she should lay down to her conduct.

[pp. 123-126.]

A circumstance by which the two sexes are particularly distinguished from each other, is, that the one is accustomed more to the exercise of its reasoning powers, and the other of its feelings. Women have a frame of body more delicate and susceptible of impression than men, and, in proportion as they receive a less intellectual education, are more unreservedly under the empire of feeling. Feeling is liable to become a source of erroneous decisions, because a mind not accustomed to logical analysis, cannot be expected accurately to discriminate between the simple dictates of an ingenuous mind, and the factitious sentiments of a partial education. Habits of deduction enable us to correct this defect. But habits of deduction may generate habits of sophistry; and scepticism and discussion, while they undermine our prejudices, have sometimes a tendency to weaken or distort our feelings. Hence we may infer one of the advantages accruing from the association of persons of an opposite sex: they may be

expected to counteract the principal mistake into which either is in danger to fall.

Mary and myself perhaps each carried farther than to its common extent the characteristic of the sexes to which we belonged. I have been stimulated, as long as I can remember, by the love of intellectual distinction; but, as long as I can remember, I have been discouraged, when casting the sum of my intellectual value, by finding that I did not possess, in the degree of some other persons, an intuitive sense of the pleasures of the imagination. Perhaps I feel them as vividly as most men; but it is often rather by an attentive consideration, than an instantaneous survey. They have been liable to fail of their effect in the first experiment; and my scepticism has often led me anxiously to call in the approved decisions of taste, as a guide to my judgment, or a countenance to my enthusiasm. One of the leading passions of my mind has been an anxious desire not to be deceived. This has led me to view the topics of my reflection on all sides, and to examine and re-examine without end the questions that interest me. Endless disquisition however is not always the parent of certainty.

What I wanted in this respect, Mary possessed in a degree superior to any other person I ever knew. Her feelings had a character of peculiar strength and decision; and the discovery of them, whether in matters of

taste or of moral virtue, she found herself unable to control. She had viewed the objects of nature with a lively sense and an ardent admiration, and had developed their beauties. Her education had been fortunately free from the prejudices of system and bigotry, and her sensitive and generous spirit was left to the spontaneous exercise of its own decisions. The warmth of her heart defended her from artificial rules of judgment; and it is therefore surprising what a degree of soundness pervaded her sentiments. In the strict sense of the term, she had reasoned comparatively little; and she was therefore little subject to diffidence and scepticism. Yet a mind more candid in perceiving and retrating error, when it was pointed out to her, perhaps never existed. This arose naturally out of the directness of her sentiments, and her fearless and unstudied veracity.

A companion like this, excites and animates the mind. From such an one we imbibe, what perhaps I principally wanted, the habit of minutely attending to first impressions, and justly appreciating them. Her taste awakened mine; her sensibility determined me to a careful development of my feelings. She delighted to open her heart to the beauties of nature; and her propensity in this respect led me to a more intimate contemplation of them. My scepticism in judging, yielded to the coincidence of another's judgment; and especially when the judgment of that other

was such, that the more I made experiment of it, the more was I convinced of its rectitude.

The improvement I had reason to promise myself, was however yet in its commencement, when a fatal event, hostile to the moral interests of mankind, ravished from me the light of my steps, and left to me nothing but the consciousness of what I had possessed, and must now possess no more !

While I have described the improvement I was in the act of receiving, I believe I have put down the leading traits of her intellectual character from which it flowed.

THE END.

A SUPPLEMENT

to

MEMOIRS OF MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

Chronologically Arranged and containing hitherto Unpublished and Uncollected Material

"Every prospect smiled"

From the original drawing by William Blake

(*cf.* below, pp. 207-9)

A SUPPLEMENT TO MEMOIRS

Then gently scan your brother Man,
Still gentlier sister Woman;
Though they may gang a kennin wrang,
To step aside is human:
One point must still be greatly dark,
The reason Why *they do it;*
And just as lamely can ye mark
How far perhaps they rue it.

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord, its various tone,
Each spring, its various bias:
Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's done we partly may compute,
But not know what's resisted.

ROBERT BURNS.

The material which follows has gone through several metamorphosis since its collection was first undertaken. Originally conceived as Notes, I came later to regard it as a Preface and then as an Introduction. Not properly coming under any of these heads, it is now presented, I hope rightly and appropriately, as: A SUPPLEMENT.

I

1759-1780

CHILDHOOD—PASSAGES FROM *MARY* AND *MARIA: A FRAGMENT*—FRIENDSHIP WITH FANNY BLOOD.

For many of the facts of Mary's career Godwin is the sole authority; but it is possible, in a number of instances, to supply additional information regarding Mary's life, her books, her family and friends.

Of Mary's childhood her own writings are the only source of evidence. Her novel *Mary*, written at Bristol Hot-Wells in the summer of 1787, when she was twenty-eight, and her unfinished novel *The Wrongs of Woman: or, Maria, A Fragment*, begun ten years later and interrupted by her death, both contain passages of an autobiographical nature.

In 1768, while the Wollstonecrafts were still living in that 'convenient house behind the town of Barking in Essex, eight miles from London,' their youngest son, James, was born. Mary was in her ninth year when her brother was born, and the same year, at Michaelmas, the family 'removed to a farm near Beverley in Yorkshire,' where Mary would have been near enough to the mouth of the Humber—at that place really an arm of the North Sea—to 'listen to the sea that was not far distant.'

Here the family remained until July 1774, and until Mary was fifteen, and here most of her recollections of her childhood probably centre. Twenty-one years later Mary recorded her impressions on revisiting

the place. While she was waiting in Hull for the vessel that was to carry her to Sweden she met a physician and his wife and went with them to Beverley. She wrote to Imlay:

Sunday, June 14 [1795].

They took me in their carriage to [Beverley], and I ran over my favourite walks, with a vivacity that would have astonished you. The town did not please me quite so well as formerly—It appeared so diminutive; and, when I found that many of the inhabitants had lived in the same houses ever since I left it, I could not help wondering how they could thus have vegetated, whilst I was running over a world of sorrow, snatching at pleasure, and throwing off prejudices. The place where I at present am, is much improved; but it is astonishing what strides aristocracy and fanaticism have made, since I resided in this country.[1]

It was during the last year she spent in Beverley that Mary wrote to her friend, Miss Massey, the first of the letters that Miss Massey printed, under the name 'Jane Gardiner,' in a little volume entitled *English Exercises*. These eleven letters date from 1773 to 1782, and are written from Beverley, Bath, and London. I have vainly searched, both here and in England, for a copy of the book containing them.

The family's next removal was 'to a house in Queen's Row, in Hoxton, near London.' Curiously enough, Godwin had entered Hoxton College as a student in September 1773, where, he tells us:

I read all the authors of greatest repute, for and against the Trinity, original sin, and the most

[1] *Posthumous Works*, Letter XLV. iii. 137, 8.

disputed doctrines, but I was not yet of an understanding sufficiently ripe for impartial decision, and all my inquiries terminated in Calvinism. I was famous in our college for calm and impassionate discussion; for one whole summer I rose at five and went to bed at midnight, that I might have sufficient time for theology and metaphysics. . . .[2]

But in those days Godwin did not meet Mary—perhaps fortunately.

Her father's disagreeable traits and the favouritism shown to her elder brother Edward are described alike in *Mary* and in *Maria*. Speaking of the father of 'Mary' and of his treatment of her mother, Mary says:

. . . He treated her with indifference; but when her illness at all interfered with his pleasures, he expostulated in the most cruel manner, and visibly harassed the invalid. Mary would then assiduously try to turn his attention to something else; and when sent out of the room would watch at the door, until the storm was over, for unless it was, she could not rest. Other causes also contributed to disturb her repose: her mother's luke-warm manner of performing her religious duties, filled her with anguish; and when she observed her father's vices, the unbidden tears would flow. She was miserable when beggars were driven from the gate without being relieved; if she could do it unperceived, she would give them her own breakfast, and feel gratified, when, in consequence of it, she was pinched by hunger.

She had once, or twice, told her little secrets to her mother; they were laughed at, and she determined never to do it again. In this manner was she left to reflect on her own feelings; and so

[2] Kegan Paul: *William Godwin*, i. 14, 15.

strengthened were they by being meditated on, that her character early became singular and permanent. Her understanding was strong and clear, when not too clouded by her feelings; but she was too much the creature of impulse, and the slave of compassion.[3]

In *Maria* she thus writes of her parents:

His orders were not to be disputed; and the whole house was expected to fly at the word of command. . . . He was to be instantaneously obeyed, especially by my mother, whom he very benevolently married for love; but took care to remind her of the obligation when she dared, in the slightest instance, to question his absolute authority. My eldest brother, it is true, as he grew up, was treated with more respect by my father; and became in due form the deputy-tyrant of the house. The representative of my father, a being privileged by nature—a boy, and the darling of my mother, he did not fail to act like an heir apparent. Such indeed was my mother's extravagant partiality, that, in comparison with her affection for him, she might be said not to love the rest of her children. Yet none of the children seemed to have so little affection for her. Extreme indulgence had rendered him so selfish, that he only thought of himself; and from tormenting insects and animals, he became the despot of his brothers, and still more of his sisters.

It is perhaps difficult to give you an idea of the petty cares which obscured the morning of my life; continual restraints in the most trivial matters; unconditional submission to orders, which, as a mere child, I soon discovered to be unreasonable, because inconsistent and contradictory. Thus are we

[3] *Mary*, chap. ii.

destined to experience a mixture of bitterness, with the recollection of our most innocent enjoyments.

The circumstances which, during my childhood, occurred to fashion my mind, were various; yet, as it would probably afford me more pleasure to revive the fading remembrance of new-born delight, than you, my child, could feel in the perusal, I will not entice you to stray with me into the verdant meadow, to search for the flowers that youthful hopes scatter in every path; though, as I write, I almost scent the fresh green of spring—of that spring which never returns!

I had two sisters, and one brother, younger than myself; my brother Robert was two years older, and might truly be termed the idol of his parents, and the torment of the rest of the family. Such indeed is the force of prejudice, that what was called spirit and wit in him, was cruelly repressed as forwardness in me.

My mother had an indolence of character, which prevented her from paying much attention to our education. But the healthy breeze of a neighbouring heath, on which we bounded at pleasure, volatilized the humours that improper food might have generated. And to enjoy open air and freedom, was paradise, after the unnatural restraint of our fireside, where we were often obliged to sit three or four hours together, without daring to utter a word, when my father was out of humour, from want of employment, or of a variety of boisterous amusement.[4]

The residence of the Wollstonecraft family at Hoxton continued, as Godwin related, 'a year and a half.' While here Mary was introduced by a Mrs. Clare to her friend Fanny Blood. Here is the account

[4] 'Maria' in *Posthumous Works*, i. 142-6.

given in *Mary* of 'Ann,' whose original was Fanny Blood:

> Near her [Mary's] father's house lived a poor widow, who had been brought up in affluence, but reduced to great distress by the extravagance of her husband; he had destroyed his constitution while he spent his fortune; and dying, left his wife and five small children, to live on a very scanty pittance. The eldest daughter was for some years educated by a distant relation, a clergyman. While she was with him, a young gentleman, son to a man of property in the neighbourhood, took particular notice of her. It is true, he never talked of love; but then they played and sung in concert; drew landscapes together, and while she worked he read to her, cultivated her taste, and stole imperceptibly her heart. Just at this juncture, when smiling unanalyzed hope made every prospect bright, and gay expectation danced in her eyes, her benefactor died. She returned to her mother:—the companion of her youth forgot her. They took no more sweet counsel together. This disappointment spread a sadness over her countenance, and made it interesting. She grew fond of solitude, and her character appeared similar to Mary's, though her natural disposition was different.
>
> She was several years older than Mary, yet her refinement, her taste, caught her eye, and she eagerly sought for her friendship: before her return she had assisted the family, which was now almost reduced to the last ebb; and now she had another motive to actuate her.
>
> As she had often occasion to send messages to Ann, her new friend, mistakes were frequently made; Ann proposed that in future they should be written ones, to obviate their difficulty, and render their intercourse more agreeable. Young people

are mostly fond of scribbling; Mary had had very little instruction; but by copying her friend's letters, whose hand she admired, she soon became a proficient; a little practice made her write with tolerable correctness, and her genius gave force to it. In conversation, and in writing, when she felt, she was pathetic, tender and persuasive; and she expressed contempt with such energy, that few could stand the flash in her eyes.

As she grew more intimate with Ann, her manners were softened, and she acquired a degree of equality in her behaviour: yet still her spirits were fluctuating, and her movements rapid. She felt less pain on account of her mother's partiality to her brother, as she hoped now to experience the pleasure of being beloved; but this hope led her into new sorrows, and, as usual, paved the way for disappointment. Ann only felt gratitude; her heart was entirely engrossed by one object, and friendship could not serve as a substitute; memory officiously retraced past scenes, and unavailing wishes made time loiter.

Mary was often hurt by the involuntary indifference which these consequences produced. When her friend was all the world to her, she found she was not as necessary to her happiness; and her delicate mind could not bear to obtrude her affection, or receive love as an alms, the offspring of pity. Very frequently has she run to her with delight, and not perceiving any thing of the same kind in Ann's countenance, she has shrunk back; and, falling from one extreme into the other, instead of a warm greeting that was just slipping from her tongue, her expression seemed to be dictated by the most chilling insensibility.

She would then imagine that she looked sickly or unhappy, and then all her tenderness would return like a torrent, and bear away all reflection.

In this manner was her sensibility called forth, and exercised, by her mother's illness, her friend's misfortunes, and her own unsettled mind.[5]

The narrative goes on to describe the heroine's own feelings at this time and the appeal of nature to her sensibility:

Near to her father's house was a range of mountains; some of them were, literally speaking, cloud-capt, for on them clouds continually rested, and gave grandeur to the prospect; and down many of their sides the little bubbling cascades ran till they swelled a beautiful river. Through the straggling trees and bushes the wind whistled, and on them the birds sung, particularly the robins; they also found shelter in the ivy of an old castle, a haunted one, as the story went; it was situated on the brow of one of the mountains, and commanded a view of the sea.[6] This castle had been inhabited by some of her ancestors; and many tales had the old house-keeper told her of the worthies who had resided there.

When her mother frowned, and her friend looked cool, she would steal to this retirement, where human foot seldom trod—gaze on the sea, observe the grey clouds, or listen to the wind which struggled to free itself from the only thing that impeded its course. When more cheerful, she admired the various dispositions of light and shade, the beautiful tints the gleams of sunshine gave to the distant hills; then she rejoiced in existence, and darted into futurity.

[5] *Mary*, chap. iii.

[6] The 'cloud cap't mountains' and the castle were probably Mary's recollections of those she had seen at Mitchelstown, Ireland, about six months before she wrote this novel.

One way home was through the cavity of a rock covered with a thin layer of earth, just sufficient to afford nourishment to a few stunted shrubs and wild plants, which grew on its sides, and nodded over the summit. A clear stream broke out of it, and ran amongst the pieces of rocks fallen into it. Here twilight always reigned—it seemed the Temple of Solitude; yet, paradoxical as the assertion may appear, when the foot sounded on the rock, it terrified the intruder, and inspired a strange feeling, as if the rightful sovereign was dislodged. In this retreat she read Thomson's Seasons, Young's Night Thoughts, and Paradise Lost.

At a little distance from it were the huts of a few poor fishermen, who supported their numerous children by their precarious labour. In these little huts she frequently rested, and denied herself every childish gratification, in order to relieve the necessities of the inhabitants. Her heart yearned for them, and would dance with joy when she had relieved their wants, or afforded them pleasure.

In these pursuits she learned the luxury of doing good; and the sweet tears of benevolence frequently moistened her eyes, and gave them a sparkle which, exclusive of that, they had not; on the contrary, they were rather fixed, and would never have been observed if her soul had not animated them. They were not at all like those brilliant ones which look like polished diamonds, and dart from every superfice, giving more light to the beholders than they receive themselves.

Her benevolence, indeed, knew no bounds; the distress of others carried her out of herself; and she rested not till she had relieved or comforted them. The warmth of her compassion often made her so diligent, that many things occurred to her, which might have escaped a less interested observer.

In like manner, she entered with such spirit into whatever she read, and the emotions thereby raised were so strong, that it soon became a part of her mind.

Enthusiastic sentiments of devotion at this period actuated her; her Creator was almost apparent to her senses in his works; but they were mostly the grand or solemn features of Nature which she delighted to contemplate. She would stand and behold the waves rolling, and think of the voice that could still the tumultuous deep.

These propensities gave the colour to her mind, before the passions began to exercise their tyrannic sway, and particularly pointed out those which the soil would have a tendency to nurse.

Years after, when wandering through the same scenes, her imagination has strayed back, to trace the first placid sentiments they inspired, and she would earnestly desire to regain the same peaceful tranquillity.

Many nights she sat up, if I may be allowed the expression, *conversing* with the Author of Nature, making verses, and singing hymns of her own composing. She considered also, and tried to discern what end her various faculties were destined to pursue; and had a glimpse of a truth, which afterwards more fully unfolded itself.

She thought that only an infinite being could fill the human soul, and that when other objects were followed as a means of happiness, the delusion led to misery, the consequence of disappointment. Under the influence of ardent affections, how often has she forgot this conviction, and as often returned to it again, when it struck her with redoubled force. Often did she taste unmixed delight; her joys, her ecstacies arose from genius.

She was now fifteen, and she wished to receive the holy sacrament; and discussing some points of doctrine which puzzled her, she would sit up half

the night, her favourite time for employing her mind; she too plainly perceived that she saw through a glass darkly; and that the bounds set to stop our intellectual researches, is one of the trials of a probationary state.

But her affections were roused by the display of divine mercy; and she eagerly desired to commemorate the dying love of her great benefactor. The night before the important day, when she was to take on herself the baptismal vow, she could not go to bed; the sun broke in on her meditations, and found her not exhausted by her watchings.

The orient pearls were strewed around—she hailed the morn, and sung with wild delight, Glory to God on high, good will toward men. She was indeed so much affected when she joined in the prayer for her eternal preservation, that she could hardly conceal her violent emotions; and the recollection never failed to wake her dormant piety when earthly passions made it grow languid.

These various movements of her mind were not commented on, nor were the luxuriant shoots restrained by culture. The servants and the poor adored her.

In order to be enabled to gratify herself in the highest degree, she practised the most rigid economy, and had such power over her appetites and whims, that without any great effort she conquered them so entirely, that when her understanding or affections had an object, she almost forgot she had a body which required nourishment.

This habit of thinking, this kind of absorption, gave strength to the passions.

We will now enter on the more active field of life.[7]

In entering on this 'more active field of life' Mary leaps between chapters over two years in her heroine's

[7] *Mary*, chap. iv.

life, so we shall take leave of her for a moment and record a sketch of her brother Edward given in another place :

> My eldest brother was articled to a neighbouring attorney, the shrewdest, and, I may add, the most unprincipled man in that part of the country. As my brother generally came home every Saturday, to astonish my mother by exhibiting his attainments, he gradually assumed a right of directing the whole family, not excepting my father. He seemed to take a peculiar pleasure in tormenting and humbling me ; and if I ever ventured to complain of this treatment to either my father or mother, *I* was rudely rebuffed for presuming to judge of the conduct of my eldest brother.[8]

It must have been in March 1776 (estimating from the ' year and a half ' spent at Hoxton) that Edward John Wollstonecraft's wandering disposition led him and his family to spend a ' little more than a year ' in Laugharne, Pembrokeshire, Wales, where he had a farm. This was apparently his last attempt at farming.

Of Mary's sojourn in Wales there is little to be said. Even Godwin is singularly reticent. Probably at this time she observed the desolate scene of the ruined Welsh castle with its poverty-stricken inhabitants, of whose wretched condition Mrs. Mason gives an account in Chapter XIV. of *Original Stories from Real Life.* This incident was illustrated by Blake, and as this illustration chances to be the only one not included in the group of ten sepia drawings lent for reproduction by Mr. A. Edward Newton, a

[8] 'Maria,' *Posthumous Works,* 141.

facsimile of the engraving as published is here given. The words that accompany it in the printed book are:

> 'The scene pleased me,' continued Mrs. Mason, 'I thought of the various customs which the lapse of time unfolds; and dwelt on the state of the Welsh, when this castle, now so desolate, was the hospitable abode of the chief of a noble family. These reflections entirely engrossed my mind, when the sound of a harp reached my ears. . . . I listened awhile, and then trying to trace the pleasing sound, discovered, after a short search, a little hut, rudely built.'

The removal of the Wollstonecraft family from Wales took place probably about April 1777, when Mary persuaded her father 'to determine his choice in favour of the village of Walworth, that she might be near her chosen friend,' Fanny Blood. It is, I think, possible to establish their actual place of residence. Mr. J. M. Rigg, in his *D.N.B.* account of Thomas Taylor (1758-1835), Platonist, says that Taylor at this period was a clerk in 'Lubbock's bank,' and dwelt in 'a small house, 9 Manor Place, Walworth,' and goes on to say that in Taylor's house 'lodged for awhile Mary Wollstonecraft,' whose *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* he somewhat heavily parodied in his *Vindication of the Rights of Brutes*, London, 1792.

Mary's account, in the words of her fictional Mary, of the poverty-stricken condition of the Blood family, may probably be assigned to this Walworth period when certainly she was in continual intimacy with Fanny and her home.

Ann's mother's resources were failing; and the ghastly phantom, poverty, made hasty strides to catch them in its clutches. Ann had not fortitude enough to brave such accumulated misery; besides, the canker-worm was lodged in her heart, and preyed on her health. She denied herself every little comfort; things that would be no sacrifice when a person is well, are absolutely necessary to alleviate bodily pain, and support the animal functions.

There were many elegant amusements, which she had acquired a relish for, which might have taken her mind off from its most destructive bent; but these her indigence would not allow her to enjoy: forced then, by way of relaxation, to play the tunes her lover admired, and handle the pencil he taught her to hold, no wonder his image floated on her imagination, and that taste invigorated love.

Poverty, and all its inelegant attendants, were in her mother's abode; and she, though a good sort of woman, was not calculated to banish, by her trivial, uninteresting chat, the delirium in which her daughter was lost.

This ill-fated love had given a bewitching softness to her manners, a delicacy so truly feminine, that a man of any feeling could not behold her without wishing to chase her sorrows away. She was timid and irresolute, and rather fond of dissipation; grief only had power to make her reflect.

In every thing it was not the great, but the beautiful, or the pretty, that caught her attention. And in composition, the polish of style, and harmony of numbers, interested her much more than the flights of genius, or abstracted speculations.

She often wondered at the books Mary chose, who, though she had a lively imagination, would frequently study authors whose works were addressed to the understanding. This liking taught

her to arrange her thoughts, and argue with herself, even when under the influence of the most violent passions.

Ann's misfortune and ill-health were strong ties to bind Mary to her; she wished continually to have a home to receive her in, that it drove every other desire out of her mind; and, dwelling on the tender schemes which compassion and friendship dictated, she longed most ardently to put them into practice.[1]

In 1778 Mary went to spend two years in Bath as companion to that Mrs. Dawson—foe of all former companions—whose 'one son already adult' Godwin carefully removed from his Second Edition, Corrected.

She returned only because her mother was rapidly failing in health, and was not expected to live. Godwin tells us that in 1780 her father had again pulled up stakes and removed to another suburb —Enfield. So to Enfield went Mary and was with her mother in her last illness.

Mary gives us two accounts of her mother's death. That in *Mary* shall here suffice:

Fondly as she loved her friend, she did not forget her mother, whose decline was so imperceptible, that they were not aware of her approaching dissolution. The physician, however, observing the most alarming symptoms, her husband was apprised of her immediate danger. . . .

Mary was sent for; she had rambled to visit Ann, and found her in an hysteric fit. The landlord of her little farm had sent his agent for the rent, which had long been due to him; and

[1] *Mary*, chap. v.

he threatened to seize the stock that still remained, and turn them out, if they did not very shortly discharge the arrears.

As this man made a private fortune by harassing the tenants of the person to whom he was deputy, little was to be expected from his forbearance.

All this was told to Mary—and the mother added, she had many other creditors who would, in all probability, take the alarm, and snatch from them all that had been saved out of the wreck. 'I could bear all,' she cried; 'but what will become of my children? Of this child' (pointing to the fainting Ann), 'whose constitution is already undermined by care and grief—where will she go?' —Mary's heart ceased to beat while she asked the question—She attempted to speak; but the inarticulate sounds died away. Before she had recovered herself, her father called himself to enquire for her, and desired her to accompany him.

Engrossed by the scene of misery she had been witness to, she walked silently by his side, when he roused her out of her reverie by telling her that in all likelihood her mother had not many hours to live. . . .

Overwhelmed by this intelligence, Mary rolled her eyes about, then, with a vacant stare, fixed them on her father's face; but they were no longer a sense; they conveyed no ideas to her brain. As she drew near the house, her wonted presence of mind returned; after this suspension of thought, a thousand darted into her mind—her dying mother —her friend's miserable situation. . . .

She loved Ann better than any one in the world—to snatch her from the very jaws of destruction—she would have encountered a lion. To have this friend constantly with her; to make her mind easy with respect to her family, would it not be superlative bliss?

Full of these thoughts she entered her mother's chamber, but they then fled at the sight of her dying parent. She went to her, took her hand; it feebly pressed hers. 'My child,' said the languid mother: the words reached her heart; she had seldom heard them pronounced with accents denoting affection: 'My child, I have not always treated you with kindness—God forgive me! do you?' Mary's tears strayed in a disregarded stream; on her bosom the big drops fell, but did not relieve the fluttering tenant. 'I forgive you,' said she, in a tone of astonishment.

The clergyman came in to read the service for the sick. . . . Mary . . . ran to support her mother, who expired the same night in her arms.

Ann was sent for to console her.[2]

[2] *Mary*, last of chap. v.

"*God cares for them*"

From the original drawing by William Blake

(*cf.* below, pp. 207-10)

II

1780-1787

MARY ON SENSIBILITY—SOJOURN IN IRELAND AS A GOVERNESS.

In 1780, after the death of Mrs. Elizabeth Wollstonecraft, the family scattered. Soon after his wife died Edward John brought into the house a new wife or a mistress—Kegan Paul terms her one: Mary the other[1]—and conditions became so intolerable that the daughters, at least, could no longer remain. Everina went to keep house for her brother Edward, who had 'settled near the Tower in London'; Eliza married a Mr. Bishop—George Venables in *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*—with whom she led a most wretched life; Mary joined Fanny Blood at Walham Green 'and earned her livelihood by helping Mrs. Blood, who took in needlework'; and James went to sea in September, on board H.M. ship *Carysfoot*. Charles, 'her favourite brother, had been articled to the elder [Edward], an attorney in the Minories.' Some years later, *cir.* 1789, Charles is mentioned as living with relatives in Cork. He was later placed 'with a farmer for instruction,' and

[1] Cf. 'Maria' *Posthumous Works*, i. 172-77, 181.

towards the end of 1792 Mary paid his passage to America.

Of the events of the next few years Godwin has given a succinct account. The starting of the school with Fanny Blood is not emphasized in the autobiographical fictions, the narrative of *Mary* passing to a moving description of ' Ann's ' worsening illness.

> Another year passed away with increasing apprehensions. Ann had a hectic cough, and many unfavourable prognostications : Mary then forgot every thing but the fear of losing her, and even imagined that her recovery would have made her happy.
>
> Her anxiety led her to study physic, and for some time she only read books of that cast ; and this knowledge, literally speaking, ended in vanity and vexation of spirit, as it enabled her to foresee what she could not prevent. . . . She forgot all, listening to Ann's cough, and supporting her languid frame. She would then catch her to her bosom with convulsive eagerness as if to save her from sinking into an opening grave.[2]

In the novel *Mary* the heroine at this time had a husband, aged fifteen, whom she had reluctantly married, forced by her father's importunity, at her mother's death-bed. We are told ' her husband set off for the continent the same day, with a tutor, to finish his studies at one of the foreign universities.' The novel then continues with a rather long account of the voyage of Mary and Ann to Lisbon, of Ann's death there, and of Mary's solitary return, which is of course based on the author's recollection of her

[2] *Mary*, chap. vi.

own voyage to Lisbon to be with her friend Fanny Blood during her fatal confinement.

Mary in her little fiction thus describes her own home-coming :

> In England then landed the forlorn wanderer. . . . She knew none of the inhabitants of the vast city to which she was going ; the mass of buildings appeared to her a huge body without an informing soul. As she passed through the streets in a hackney-coach, disgust and horror alternately filled her mind. She met some women drunk ; and the manners of those who attacked the sailors, made her shrink into herself and exclaim : Are these my fellow creatures ! . . .
>
> She saw vulgarity, dirt, and vice—her soul sickened ; this was the first time such complicated misery obtruded itself on her sight. Forgetting her own griefs, she gave the world a much indebted tear ; mourned for a world in ruins. She then perceived, that great part of her comfort must arise from viewing the smiling face of nature, and be reflected from the view of innocent enjoyments : she was fond of seeing animals at play, and could not bear to see her own species sink below them.
>
> In a little dwelling in one of the villages near London, lived the mother of Ann. . . . To her house Mary directed the coach, and told the unfortunate woman of her loss. . . .

We may dismiss the novel with a final extract in order to give Mary's definition of ' sensibility,' a word and emotion greatly overworked at that period :

> Sensibility is the most exquisite feeling of which the human soul is susceptible : when it pervades us, we feel happy ; and could it last unmixed, we

might form some conjecture of the bliss of those paradisaical days, when the obedient passions were under the dominion of reason, and the impulses of the heart did not need correction.

It is this quickness, this delicacy of feeling, which enables us to relish the sublime touches of the poet, and the painter; it is this, which expands the soul, gives an enthusiastic greatness, mixed with tenderness, when we view the magnificent objects of nature; or hear of a good action. The same effect we experience in the spring, when we hail the returning sun and the consequent renovation of nature; when the flowers unfold themselves, and exhale their sweets, and the voice of music is heard in the land. Softened by tenderness, the soul is disposed to be virtuous. Is any sensual gratification to be compared to that of feeling the eyes moistened after having comforted the unfortunate?

Sensibility is indeed the foundation of all our happiness; but these raptures are unknown to the depraved sensualist, who is only moved by what strikes his gross senses; the delicate embellishments of nature escape his notice; as do the gentle and interesting affections.—But it is only to be felt; it escapes discussion.

Mary once more described this state of mind, when attributing these remarks to Sagestus, the sage, in her romance *The Cave of Fancy*:

To give the shortest definition of sensibility, replied the sage, I should say that it is the result of acute senses, finely fashioned nerves, which vibrate at the slightest touch, and convey such clear intelligence to the brain, that it does not require to be arranged by the judgment. Such persons instantly enter into the character of others, and instinctively discern what will give pain to every

human being ; their own feelings are so varied that they seem to contain in themselves, not only all the passions of the species, but their various modifications. Exquisite pain and pleasure is their portion ; nature wears for them a different aspect than is displayed to common mortals. One moment it is a paradise ; all is beautiful ; a cloud arises, an emotion receives a sudden damp ; darkness invades the sky, and the world is an unweeded garden.

. . . . . .

When she reached England once more Mary found that the affairs of the school were at low ebb. She wrote to George Blood, Fanny's brother, from Newington Green, shortly after her return from Lisbon :

Feb. 4th [1786].

I write to you, my dear George, lest my silence should make you uneasy, yet what have I to say that will not have the same effect ? Things do not go well with me, and my spirits seem for ever flown. I was a month on my passage, and the weather was so tempestuous, we were several times in imminent danger. If it had pleased Heaven to have called me hence, what a world of care I should have missed. . . .

The school dwindles to nothing, and we shall soon lose our last boarder, Mrs. Disney. . . .[3]

In the face of such unfavourable conditions Mary did not hesitate to give up the school, and soon after she ' spent some time ' at Eton (probably from March or April to October 1786), where she lodged with an assistant master named Prior and his wife. It was here that she received those impressions which she

[3] Kegan Paul : *William Godwin*, i. 179.

afterwards recorded in *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman:*

> I think schools, as they are now regulated, are hot-beds of vice and folly, and the knowledge of human nature, supposed to be attained there, merely cunning selfishness.
>
> At schools boys become gluttons and slovens, and, instead of cultivating domestic affections, very early rush into the libertinism which destroys the constitution before it is formed; hardening the heart as it weakens the understanding. . . . What boy ever recollected with pleasure the years he spent in close confinement, at an academy near London? unless, indeed, he should, by chance, remember the poor scarecrow of an usher, whom he tormented; or, the tartman, from whom he caught a cake, to devour it with the catish appetite of selfishness. At boarding-schools of every description, the relaxation of the junior boys is mischief; and of the senior, vice. Besides, in great schools, what can be more prejudicial to the moral character than the system of tyranny and abject slavery which is established among the boys, to say nothing of the slavery to forms which makes religion worse than a farce? For what good can be expected from the youth who receives the sacrament of the Lord's supper, to avoid forfeiting half a guinea, which he probably spends in some sensual manner? [4]

While Mary was at Eton and at the age of twenty-seven she wrote, at the suggestion of her friend, the Rev. John Hewlett, her first book, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters.* Hewlett took the MS. to Joseph Johnson, publisher, St. Paul's Churchyard, who accepted it at the price of ten guineas, which

[4] *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* chap. xii. 'On National Education,' p. 366.

Mary at once applied towards the transportation of the Blood family to Ireland. The book received its first review in April 1787, and was probably published in February or March of that year, when Mary was still in Dublin.

It is a solid, sensible little book, and met with a unanimously favourable reception from its reviewers. It contains many characteristic passages, precursors of her later, more mature opinions, and is, like all her work, intensely self-revealing.

Through the influence of the Priors Mary obtained the position of governess, at forty pounds a year, to the daughters of Lady Kingsborough in Ireland, and in October 1786 she sailed with the Priors, who were crossing to Dublin. Kegan Paul, in his account of Mary's sojourn in Ireland,[5] is a year too late in all his dates from the time that Mary left Eton to her return to London. I contributed a letter on this subject to *Notes and Queries*,[6] giving sufficient evidence for this statement. Another obvious instance of this error occurs in his book cited above, where on p. 191 of the first volume he quotes a letter from Mary to Everina, dated without brackets, 'London, Nov. 7th, 1788,' referring to her recent arrival in London. Two pages later he quotes Johnson's memorandum stating that 'she entered upon her house in George St. at Michaelmass 1787.'

Two letters (hitherto uncollected) that Mary wrote to Mr. Johnson during her residence with the Kingsboroughs are here given:

[5] *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries.*

[6] 13 S.I., July 7, 1923, pp. 11, 12.

Addressed to ' Mr. Johnson, bookseller, London.'

Mitchelstown, Dec. 5th [1786].

Sir,—When I had the pleasure of seeing you, if I mistake not, you mentioned to me, that Mrs. Barbauld intended undertaking a new plan of education. I wish to hear some particulars about it, and know not any person, whom I could apply to, for the necessary information, but yourself. Mrs. Fitzgerald, Lady Kingsborough's stepmother, has an only son, of course a great favourite. She has deliberated so long about the method she should adopt for his education that the season is almost passed away. Some place must then be determined on immediately ; and she had requested me to make some enquiries for her. A public school is objected to—nor would she wish him to reside in London, on account of the air, which country people lay great stress on. Money is not an object as he has an independent fortune. She would give a hundred, or even more, a year, if he could be placed in a respectable family, a Clergyman's would be preferred. I will just describe the kind of situation she wishes for. A well regulated family, and a few other pupils ; but above all that her son might frequently be in company with his tutor, as his temper is violent and his mind not cultivated. She is a good sort of woman, and more anxious about his heart than head—and particularly desirous that sentiments of religion should be fixed in his mind. Mr. Hewlett I know had some intention of undertaking a similar plan ; but I have not heard any thing of it. I should be much obliged to you, if you would inform me directly, if Mrs. Barbauld or Mr. Hewlett have actually carried out their plan into execution, and I should be very glad if you would, as soon as convenient, send me a dozen of Mr. Hewlett's spelling-books for Lady F.

His sermons, and Charlotte Smith's poems,[7] and a few copies of my little book if it is published.[8] Let them be directed to me at Viscount Kingsborough's, Dublin.

As I mentioned to you, previous to my departure, that I entered on my new way of life with extreme regret—I am vain enough to imagine that you wish to hear how I like my situation. A state of dependance must ever be irksome to me, and I have *many* vexations to encounter, which some persons would term trifling. I have most of the negative comforts of life, yet when weighed with liberty they are of little value. In a christian sense I am resigned—and contented; but it is with pleasure that I observe my declining health, and cherish the hope that I am hastening to the land where all these cares will be forgotten.

I am, Sir, Yours Respectfully,

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT.[9]

The Same to the Same:

Dublin, April 14 [1787].

I am still an invalid—and begin to believe that I ought never to expect to enjoy health. My mind preys on my body—and, when I endeavour to be useful, I grow too much interested for my own peace. Confined almost entirely to the society of children, I am anxiously solicitous for their future welfare, and mortified beyond measure when counteracted in my endeavours to improve them. I feel all of a mother's fears for the swarm of little ones[1]

[7] *Elegaic Sonnets, and other Essays.* London, 1784. 3rd edition, London, 1786.

[8] *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters.* The 'little book' was not published until early the next year.

[9] Original in possession of Mr. Richard H. Thornton, Portland, Oregon. Above text transcribed from *Notes and Queries,* 12 S. XII., April 28, 1923.

[1] Seven children made up this 'swarm of little ones': George, b. 1771; Robert Edward, b. 1773; Margaret

which surround me, and observe disorders, without having power to apply the proper remedies. How can I be reconciled to life, when it is always a painful warfare, and when I am deprived of all the pleasures I relish?—I allude to rational conversations, and domestic affections. Here, alone, a poor solitary individual in a strange land, tied to one spot, and subject to the caprice of another can I be contented? I am desirous to convince you that I have *some* cause for sorrow—and am not without reason detached from life. I shall hope to hear that you are well, and am yours sincerely

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT.[2]

One of the persons Mary met in Ireland, of whom Godwin tells us 'she always spoke as the most perfect gentleman she had ever known,' was 'Mr. George Ogle, member of parliament for the county of Wexford.' She mentions him again in her letter of November 5, soon to follow. This gentleman (1742-1814) was a talented Irish statesman and, although he declined to publish his poems, a considerable poet. He was Irish M.P. for Wexford for nearly thirty years, Irish Privy Councillor 1783, and Governor of Wexford in 1796. The poems for which he is best known are 'Molly Asthore' and 'The Banks of Banna.' Burns spoke of the latter as being 'heavenly, and certainly Irish.' It is not too long to quote:

Shepherds, I have lost my love,—
Have you seen my Anna?
Pride of every shady grove
On the banks of Banna.

Jane, Caroline, Mary Elizabeth, Jane Diana, and Louisa Eleanora.

[2] *Posthumous Works*, iv. 61, 2.

I for her my home forsook,
Near yon misty mountain,
Left my flocks, my pipe, my crook,
Greenwood shade and fountain.

Never shall I see them more
Until her returning;
All the joys of life are o'er—
From gladness changed to mourning.

Whither is my charmer flown?
Shepherds, tell me whither?
Ah! woe for me, perhaps she's gone
For ever and for ever?

A scandalous event, in which Mary Elizabeth King, one of Mary's Irish pupils, was involved, occurred more than ten years after Mary had left the Kingsborough family. I mention it here, however, since it was later seized upon by two malicious reviewers of Godwin's *Memoirs* and attributed by them to Mary's system of education.[2]

These reviews were in *The European Magazine*, April 1798, and *The British Critic*, September of the same year.

A few more quotations from letters written by Mary from Ireland will not be out of place. Very soon after her arrival she wrote to Everina:

The Castle, Mitchelstown, Oct. 30 (1786).

Well, my dear girl, I am at length arrived at my journey's end. . . . I have been so very low-spirited for some days past, I could not write. . . .

[2] Any reader desiring the details of this unfortunate affair may refer to my letter of inquiry in *Notes and Queries*, 12 S. IX. Dec. 17, 1921, p. 409; and to the comprehensive reply by Mr. R. S. Pengelly in *Ibid.* 12 S. X. Jan. 7, 1922, pp. 10, 11.

There was such a solemn kind of stupidity about this place as froze my very blood. I entered the great gates with the same kind of feeling I should have if I was going into the Bastille. . . . I found I was to encounter a host of females—My Lady, her stepmother, and three sisters, and Mrses. and Misses without number, who of course would examine me with the most minute attention. I have not seen much of her as she is confined to her room by a sore throat, but I have seen half a dozen of her companions, I mean not her children, but her dogs. To see a woman without any softness in her manners caressing animals, and using infantile expressions is, you may conceive, very absurd and ridiculous, but a fine lady is a new species to me of animal. I am, however, treated as a gentlewoman by every part of the family, but the forms and parades of high life suit not my mind. . . .

The children are, literally speaking, wild Irish, unformed and not very pleasing. . . .

Mary to Mrs. Bishop.

Mitchelstown, Nov. 5th (1786).

The castle is very pleasantly situated, and commands the kind of prospect I most admire. Near the house, literally speaking, is a cloud-capped hill, and altogether the country is pleasant, and would please me when anything of the kind could rouse my attention. But my spirits have been in continual agitation, and when they will be at rest, heaven only knows. I fear I am not equal to the task I have been persuaded to undertake, and this fear worries me.

Lady K. is a clever woman, and a well-meaning one, but not of the order of being that I could love. With his Lordship I have had little conversation, but his countenance does not promise more than

good humour, and a little *fun* not refined. Another face in the house appears to me more interesting, a pale one, not other than the author of ' Shepherds I have lost my love.' [3] His wife is with him—a gentle pleasing creature, and her sister, a beauty and a sensible woman into the bargain. Besides them and several visitors, we have resident here Lady K.'s stepmother, and her three daughters, fine girls, just going to market, as their brother says. I have committed to my care three girls, the eldest fourteen, by no means handsome, yet a sweet girl.[4] She has a wonderful capacity, but she has such a multiplicity of employment it has not room to expand itself, and in all probability will be lost in a heap of rubbish, miscalled accomplishments. I am grieved at being obliged to continue so wrong a system. She is very much afraid of her mother—that such a creature should be ruled with a rod of iron, when tenderness would lead her anywhere ! I have just promised to send her love to my sister, so please receive it. Lady K. is very civil, nay kind, yet I cannot help fearing her. . . . You have a sneaking kindness, you say, for people of quality, and I almost forgot to tell you I was in company with a Lord Fingal in the packet. . . . I intend visiting the poor cabins. . . .

Mary to Everina.

Mitchelstown, Nov. 17 (1786).

Confined to the society of a set of silly females, I have no social converse, and their boisterous spirits and unmeaning laughter exhaust me, not forgetting hourly domestic bickerings. The topics of matrimony and dress take their turn, not in a

[3] George Ogle.

[4] This was Margaret Jane King, afterwards Countess Mountcashel.

very sentimental style—alas, poor sentiment! it has no residence here. I almost wish the girls were novel readers and romantic; I declare false refinement is better than none at all, but these girls understand several languages, and have read *cartloads* of history, for their mother was a prudent woman. Lady K.'s passion for animals fills up the hours which are not spent in dressing. All her children have been ill—very disagreeable fevers. Her ladyship visited them in a formal way, though the situation called forth my tenderness, and I endeavoured to amuse them, while she lavished awkward fondness on her dogs. I think now I hear her infantile lisp. She rouges—and in short is a fine lady, without fancy or sensibility. I am almost tormented to death by dogs. . . . I am drinking asses' milk, but do not find it of any service. I am very ill, and so low-spirited my tears flow in torrents almost insensibly. I struggle with myself, but I hope my Heavenly Father will not be extreme to mark my weakness, and that He will have compassion on a poor bruised reed, and pity a miserable wretch, whose sorrows He only knows. . .[5]

It is, of course, matter for regret to those who, like myself, would never ignore one scrap of Mary's handwriting, that Kegan Paul should have selected certain of her letters for reprinting and should have allowed those that he omitted to be scattered once again and with no record taken. Here and there in his book he summarises a period of her letter-writing, leaving the reader full of baffled longing after the autograph manuscripts. For example, he says:

The letters after this date show some improvement, both in health and spirits, though Mary was

[5] Kegan Paul: *William Godwin*, i. 185-7.

much troubled about family matters, which it is not very easy to understand in full from the allusions in the letters. It would appear, however, that Edward Wollstonecraft . . . not only refused to contribute anything to the support of his father, which fell almost entirely on Mary, but declined to afford a home any longer to Everina, who had been with him for some time. He also retained in his hands a sum of money, apparently a legacy, which the sisters conceived should have been divided between them all. He seems to have been selfish and extravagant, though doing a fair business as an attorney. The letters which passed between the sisters are either of no special interest or harp on the same string as those already quoted. In the winter of 1786 (1787 says Kegan Paul) the Kingsborough family went to Dublin, and the letters thence again afford suitable extracts.

Mary to Everina.

Dublin, March 24 (1787).

I believe I told you that as a nation, I do not admire the Irish, and as to the great world and its frivolous ceremonies I cannot away with them. They fatigue one ; I thank Heaven that I was not so unfortunate as to be born a lady of quality. I am now reading Rousseau's *Emile* and love his paradoxes. He chooses a common capacity to educate, and gives as a reason that genius will educate itself. However he rambles into that chimerical world in which I have too often wandered, and draws the usual conclusion that all is vanity and vexation of spirit. He was a strange, inconsistent, unhappy, clever creature, yet he possessed an uncommon portion of sensibility and penetration. . . .

Mary to either Eliza or Everina.

Dublin, March 14 (1787).

The day before yesterday there was a masquerade. . . . We went to a great number, and were a tolerable, nay, a much admired group. Lady K. went in a domino with a smart cockade; Miss Moore dressed in the habit of one of the females of the new discovered islands;[6] Betty D. as a forsaken shepherdess, and your sister Mary in a black domino. . . .

From Dublin Lord and Lady Kingsborough and their family went to Bristol Hotwells (*sic*), and Bath, and from these places again the letters complain bitterly of the tone of society in which Mary found herself. She speaks of the 'dissipated lives led by the women of quality,' and finds that 'in many respects the great and little vulgar resemble each other, and in none more than in the motives which induce them to marry.'[7]

In Bristol Hot-Wells Mary wrote her novel *Mary*. She was asked to leave the Kingsborough's service on account of Lady Kingsborough's jealousy of the affection her own children had for Mary. In a letter she wrote Everina from London, Nov. 7, 1787, she says: 'The regret Margaret showed, when I left her for a short time, was Lady K.'s pretext for parting with me.'

[6] The Queen Charlotte Islands: discovered and named by George Dixon in 1787.

[7] Kegan Paul: *William Godwin*, i. 188-90.

"*How delighted the old bird will be!*"

From the original drawing by William Blake

(*cf.* below, pp. 207-10)

III

1787-1790

RETURN TO LONDON—*THE ANALYTICAL MAGAZINE*—CORRESPONDENCE WITH JOHNSON—RELATIONS WITH FUSELI.

Godwin dates Mary's return to London, August 1787, and says she went immediately to the house of Johnson the publisher, who 'invited her to make his house her home, till she should have suited herself with a fixed residence. She accordingly resided at this time two or three weeks under his roof.' Joseph Johnson was Mary's life-long friend and patron: his imprint appears on every book she published.

The 'visit or two' she paid 'at the same period' of 'similar duration to some friends at no great distance from the metropolis,' reference to which Godwin omits in his second edition, undoubtedly gave the opportunity for her to write the two following letters to Johnson:

Henley, Thursday, Sept. 13 [1787].

My dear Sir,

Since I saw you, I have, literally speaking, *enjoyed* solitude. My sister [2] could not accompany

[2] Eliza Bishop, who taught in schools at Market Harborough and Henley.

me in my rambles; I therefore wandered alone, by the side of the Thames, and in the neighbouring beautiful fields and pleasure grounds: the prospects were of such a placid kind, I *caught* tranquillity while I surveyed them—my mind was *still*, though active. Were I to give you an account of how I have spent my time, you would smile.—I found an old French bible here, and amused myself with comparing it with our English translation; then I would listen to the falling leaves, or observe the various tints the autumn gave to them.—At other times, the singing of a robin, or the noise of a water-mill, engaged my attention—partial attention—for I was, at the same time, perhaps discussing some knotty point, or straying from this tiny world to new systems. After these excursions, I returned to the family meals, told the children stories (they think me *vastly* agreeable), and my sister was amused.—Well, will you allow me to call this was of passing my days pleasant?

I was just going to mend my pen; but I believe it will enable me to say all I have to add to this epistle. Have you yet heard of a habitation for me? I often think of my new plan of life; and, lest my sister should try to prevail on me to alter it, I have avoided mentioning it to her. I am determined!—Your sex generally laugh at female determinations; but let me tell you, I never yet resolved to do anything of consequence, that I did not adhere resolutely to it, till I had accomplished my purpose, improbable as it might have appeared to a more timid mind. In the course of near nine and twenty years I have gathered some experience, and felt many *severe* disappointments—and what is the amount? I long for a little peace and *independence*! Every obligation we receive from our fellow-creatures is a new shackle, takes from our native freedom, and debases the mind,

makes us mere earthworms—I am not fond of grovelling!

I am, Sir, yours, etc.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT.

Market Harborough.

MY DEAR SIR, Sept. 20 [1787].

You left me with three opulent tradesmen; their conversation was not calculated to beguile the way, when the sable curtain concealed the beauties of nature. I listened to the tricks of the trade—and shrunk away, without wishing to grow rich; even the novelty of the subjects did not render them pleasing; fond as I am of tracing the passions in all their different forms—I was not surprised by any glimpse of the sublime, or beautiful—though one of them imagined I should be a useful partner in a good *firm*. I was very much fatigued, and have scarcely recovered myself. I do not expect to enjoy the same tranquil pleasures Henley afforded; I meet with new objects to employ my mind; but many painful emotions are complicated with the reflections they give rise to.

I do not intend to enter on the *old* topic, yet hope to hear from you—and am yours etc.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT.[3]

After making these visits, Mary returned to London. 'At Michaelmas 1787, she entered upon a house in George Street on the Surrey side of Black Friar's Bridge, which Mr. Johnson had provided for her during her excursion into the country.'

Two months after Mary had 'entered upon' this house, she wrote her sister Everina:

[Mr. Johnson] has now settled me in a little house in a street near Blackfriar's Bridge. . . . I

[3] *Posthumous Works*, 'Letters to Johnson,' II. III. iv. 63-7.

have given him *Mary*, and before your vacation I shall finish another book for young people, which I think has some merit. . . . Whenever I am tired of solitude I go to Mr. Johnson's, and there I meet the kind of company I find most pleasure in. . . . I spent a day at Mrs. Trimmer's, and found her a truly respectable woman. . . . I have a room but not furniture. . . . If you pay any visits, you will comply with my whim, and not mention my place of abode or mode of life.

In 1788 Mary published three different books : two original, one a translation from the French. The first was entitled : *Original Stories from Real Life.* No plates were included in this, its first edition.

There followed *Mary, A Fiction*, published almost simultaneously.

Both of these were published during the first half of the year, and were favourably received by the reviewers.

Mary's translation of Necker, entitled : *Of the Importance of Religious Opinions*, was issued late in the year ; the earliest review it got was *The Analytical Review* in January 1789, written by Mary herself !

In May 1788 was started *The Analytical Review.* The first two volumes run from May to December. Four months go to the volume ; three volumes to the year. The magazine continued in this form through twenty volumes, *i.e.* until December 1794. Starting with 1795 there were only six months to the volume and two volumes a year. The original series continued in this manner through Vol. XXVIII. to December 1798 ; a new series carried it from January to June 1799, at which date the magazine expired.

Besides being an early and continuous contributor

to this paper, and writing and translating many books for Johnson, Mary also acted, according to Kegan Paul, ' as Mr. Johnson's literary adviser or " reader," ' and he prints a letter she wrote, in this capacity, to Mary Hays ' in regard to the preface of a volume of Essays. . . . Her honest plainness of speech on this occasion led to a long friendship, which had . . . memorable influence on her after life.'

I yesterday mentioned to Mr. Johnson your request, and he assented, desiring that the title page might be sent to him. I therefore can say nothing more, for trifles of this kind I have always left to him to settle; and, you must be aware, madam, that the *honour* of publishing, the phrase on which you have laid a stress, is the cant of both trade and sex; for if really equality should ever take place in society, the man who is employed and gives a just equivalent for the money he receives will not behave with the servile obsequiousness of a servant.

I am now going to treat you with still greater frankness. I do not approve of your preface—and I will tell you why. If your work should deserve attention, it is a blur on the very face of it. Disadvantages of education, etc., ought, in my opinion, never to be pleaded with the public in excuse for defects of any importance, because if the writer has not sufficient strength of mind to overcome the common difficulties which lie in his way, nature seems to command him, with a very audible voice, to leave the task of instructing to those who can. This kind of vain humility has ever disgusted me—and I should say to an author who humbly sued for forbearance, If you have not a tolerably good opinion of your own production, why intrude it on the public? We have plenty of bad books already, that have just gasped for breath and died. The

last paragraph I particularly object to—it is so full of vanity. Your male friends will treat you like a woman—and many a man, for instance Dr. Johnson, Lord Littleton, and even Dr. Priestley, have insensibly been led to utter warm eulogiums in private that they would be sorry openly to avow without some cooling explanatory ifs. An author, especially a woman, should be cautious lest she too hastily swallows the crude praises which partial friend and polite acquaintance bestow thoughtlessly when the supplicating eye looks for them. In short, it requires great resolution to try rather to be useful than to please. With this remark in your head, I must beg you to pardon my freedom whilst you consider the purport of what I am going to add—rest on yourself. If your essays have merit, they will stand alone; if not, the *shouldering up* of Dr. this or that will not long keep them from falling to the ground. The vulgar have a pertinent proverb: 'Too many cooks spoil the broth'; and let me remind you that when weakness claims indulgence, it seems to justify the despotism of strength. Indeed, the preface, and even the pamphlet, is too full of yourself—inquiries ought to be made before they are answered; and till a work strongly interests the public true modesty should keep the author in the background—for it is only about the character and life of a *good* author that curiosity is active—a blossom is but a blossom.[4]

ST. PAUL'S. Nov. 25th, 1792.

As you seemed uneasy when you wrote, contrary to my first intention, I have just now spoken to

[4] This letter was printed by Kegan Paul in the 'Memoir' prefixed to his 1879 edition of *Mary Wollstonecraft: Letters to Imlay*, pp. xxi-xxiii; this 'Memoir' having been first printed under the head 'Mary Wollstonecraft: A Vindication' in *Fraser's Magazine*, June 1878 (97: 748-62).

Mr. J., who desires me to tell you that he very willingly waves the privilege of seniority, though, as it is an impropriety, I should think his name might as well be omitted.

In the period 1788-90 Mary carried on quite a correspondence with Johnson, chiefly on the subject of *The Analytical Review* and her contributions. Godwin printed sixteen of those letters in the fourth volume of *Posthumous Works*, and a few extracts may be of interest here:

LETTER IV

Friday night (1788).

My dear Sir,

Though your remarks are generally judicious—I cannot *now* concur with you, I mean with respect to the preface,[5] and have not altered it. I hate the usual smooth way of exhibiting proud humility. A general rule *only* extends to the majority—and, believe me, the few judicious parents who may peruse my book, will not feel themselves hurt—and the weak are too vain to mind what is said in a book intended for children. . . .

[5] Preface to *Original Stories from Real Life*, first published 1788. The passage which probably caused Johnson's objection runs as follows: 'The way to render instruction most useful cannot always be adopted; knowledge should be gradually imparted, and flow more from example than teaching: example directly addresses the senses, the first inlets to the heart; and the improvement of those instruments of the understanding is the object education should have constantly in view, and over which we have most power. But to wish that parents would, themselves, mould the ductile passions, is a chimerical wish, for the present generation have their own passions to combat with, and fastidious pleasures to pursue, neglecting those pointed out by nature: we must therefore pour premature knowledge into the succeeding one; and, teaching virtue, explain the nature of vice. Cruel necessity!' It was not deleted.

I had, the other day, the satisfaction of again receiving from my poor, dear Margaret.[6] With all a mother's fondness I could transcribe a part of it. She says, every day her affections to me, and dependence on heaven increases, &c.—I miss her innocent caresses—and sometimes indulge a pleasing hope that she may be allowed to cheer my childless age—if I am to live to be old.—At any rate, I may hear of the virtues I may not contemplate.—I now allude to——. I have received another letter from her, and her childish complaints vex me—indeed they do—As usual, goodnight.

MARY.

If parents attended to their children, I would not have written the stories; for, what are books—compared to conversations which affection inforces!

LETTER VIII

You made me very low-spirited last night, by your manner of talking.—You are my only friend—the only person I am *intimate* with.—I never had a father, or a brother—you have been both to me, ever since I knew you—yet I have sometimes been very petulant.—I have been thinking of those instances of ill-humour and quickness, and they appear to me like crimes.

Yours sincerely,

MARY.

[6] Margaret King, Mary's dear friend, and pupil in Ireland, later Countess Mount Cashel, and still later, after leaving her husband and living in Italy as the wife of George William Tighe, M.P. of Co. Wicklow, they were known as 'Mr. and Mrs. Mason,' a name she adopted from the heroine of her governess's *Original Stories*.

LETTER IX

Saturday Night.

. . . I have been very ill—Heaven knows it was more than fancy. . . . I even *imagined* that I intruded on you, because you never called on me—though you perceived that I was not well. . . I acknowledge that life is but a jest—and often a frightful dream—yet catch myself every day searching for something serious—and feel real misery from the disappointment. I am a strange compound of weakness and resolution! However, if I must suffer, I will endeavour to suffer in silence. There is certainly a great defect in my mind—my wayward heart creates its own misery—Why I am made thus I cannot tell; and, till I can form some idea of the whole of my existence, I must be content to weep and dance like a child—long for a toy, and be tired of it as soon as I get it.

We must each of us wear a cap and bells; but mine, alas! has lost its bells, and is grown so heavy, I find it intolerably troublesome.—Good-night! I have been pursuing a number of strange thoughts since I began to write, and have actually wept and laughed immoderately—Surely I am a fool——

Mary W.

LETTER X

Monday morning.

I really want a German grammar, as I intend to attempt to learn that language—and I will tell you the reason why.—While I live, I am persuaded, I must exert my understanding to procure an independence, and render myself useful. To make the task easier, I ought to store my mind with

knowledge—The seed-time is passing away. I see the necessity of labouring now—and of that necessity I do not complain; on the contrary, I am thankful that I have more than common incentives to pursue knowledge, and draw my pleasures from the employments that are within my reach. You perceive that this is not a gloomy day—I feel at this moment particularly grateful to you—without your humane and *delicate* assistance, how many obstacles should I not have to encounter—too often should I have been out of patience with my fellow-creatures, whom I wish to love!—Allow me to love you, my dear sir, and call friend a being I respect. —Adieu! MARY W.

LETTER XIV[7]

[July 1788].

I send you all the books I had to review except Dr. J——'s Sermons, which I have begun. If you wish me to look over any more trash this month—you must send it directly. I have been so low-spirited since I saw you—I was quite glad, last night, to feel myself affected by some passages in Dr. J——'s sermon on the death of his wife—I seemed (suddenly) to *find my soul again*.—It has been for some time I cannot tell where. Send me the Speaker[8] and *Mary*, I want one—and I

[7] This letter furnished me with a clue to the whereabouts of Mary's early contributions to *The Analytical Review*.

[8] *The Speaker; or Miscellaneous Pieces*, Selected from the best English Writers, and disposed under proper Heads, with a View to facilitate the Improvement of Youth in Reading and Speaking, as well as to lead young Persons into Some Acquaintance with the most valuable Writers, and impress upon their Minds Sentiments of Honour and Virtue. To which is prefixed, an Essay on Elocution. By W. Enfield, LL.D., Lecturer on the Belles Lettres, in the Academy at Warrington. London: Printed for J. Johnson, St. Paul's Church-Yard. Price 3s. 6d.

shall soon want some paper—you may as well send it at the same time—for I am trying to brace my nerves that I may be industrious.—I am afraid reason is not a good bracer—for I have been reasoning for a long time with my untoward spirits—and yet my hand trembles.—I could finish a period very prettily now, by saying that it ought to be steady when I add that I am yours sincerely

MARY.

If you do not like the manner in which I reviewed Dr. J——'s s—— on his wife, be it known unto you —I *will* not do it in any other way—I felt some pleasure in paying a just tribute of respect to the memory of a man—who, in spite of his faults, I have an affection for—I say *have*, for I believe he is somewhere—*where* my soul has been gadding perhaps ;—but *you* do not live by conjectures.

The letter which follows and concludes this series refers, I believe, to Mary's masterful reply to Burke, and that it may therefore be dated (November 1790) :

MY DEAR SIR,

I send you a chapter which I am pleased with, now I see it in one point of view—and, as I have made free with the author, I hope you will not often have to say—what does this mean ?

You forgot you were to make out my account—I am, of course, over head and ears in debt ; but I have not that kind of pride, which makes some dislike to be obliged to those they respect.—On the contrary, when I involuntarily lament that I have not a father or brother, I thankfully recollect that I have received unexpected kindness from you and a few others.—So reason allows, what nature impels me to—for I cannot live without loving my fellow-creatures—nor can I love them, without discovering some virtue.

MARY.

The time has now come to introduce a person who exercised a considerable influence on this part of Mary's life. Henry Fuseli was born (Heinrich Füessli) in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1741. He came to England in 1763 and early made the acquaintance of Joseph Johnson, bookseller, who was then just starting in business for himself.

An interesting and well written contemporary opinion of Fuseli is given by William Hazlitt in his essay *On the Old Age of Artists.* He says :

> Mr. Fuseli's conversation is more striking and extravagant, but less pleasing and natural than Mr. Northcote's. He deals in paradoxes and caricatures. He talks allegories and personifications, as he paints them. You are sensible of effort without any repose—no careless pleasantry—no traits of character or touches from nature—every thing is laboured or overdone. His ideas are gnarled, hard, and distorted, like his features—his theories stalking and straddle-legged, like his gait—his projects aspiring and gigantic, like his gestures —his performance uncouth and dwarfish, like his person. His pictures are also like himself, with eye-balls of stone stuck in rims of tin, and muscles twisted together like ropes or wires.
>
> Yet Fuseli is undoubtedly a man of genius, and capable of the most wild and grotesque combinations of fancy. It is a pity that he never applied himself to painting, which must always be reduced to the test of the senses. He is a little like Dante or Ariosto ; but no more like Michael Angelo, Raphael, or Corregio, than I am. Nature, he complains, puts him out. Yet he can laugh at artists who ' paint ladies with iron lap-dogs ' ; and he describes the great masters of old in words and

images full of truth, and glancing from a pen or tongue of fire.

I conceive any person would be more struck with Mr. Fuseli at first sight, but would wish to visit Mr. Northcote oftener. There is a bold and startling outline in his style of talking, but not the delicate finishing or bland tone that there is in that of the latter. Whatever there is harsh or repulsive about him is, however, in a great degree carried off by his animated accent and broken English, which give character where there is none, and soften its asperities where it is too abrupt and violent.

I am inclined to date the beginning of Mary's acquaintance with this artist in June or July 1788, a month or two after his marriage with Sophia Rawlins. John Knowles fixed the date of their meeting two years later; but, since they were both early contributors to *The Analytical Review* and must have met frequently at Johnson's house, their first acquaintance probably began soon after the magazine was founded. The principal authority for their relations, which were at all times purely Platonic, is Fuseli's biographer John Knowles. His account, which has been carefully avoided by Mary's commentators, contains not a single fact derogatory to her. Here are a few extracts from his book.[9]

Several publications having gone so far as totally to misrepresent the nature of his [Fuseli's] intercourse with this highly-gifted lady, it becomes the duty of his biographer to give a plain statement of facts. . . .

[9] *The Life and Writings of Henry Fuseli, Esq.* . . . London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831.

Mary, Knowles goes on to say, recognised Fuseli's talent for conversation, his 'great power and fluency of words, a poetical imagination and ready wit.'

> Talents such as these, Mrs. Wollstonecraft acknowledged she never saw united in the same person; and they accordingly made a strong impression on her mind. 'For,' said she, 'I always catch something from the rich torrent of his conversation, worth storing up in my memory, to exercise my understanding.' She falsely reasoned with herself, and expressed to some of her intimate friends, that although Mrs. Fuseli had a right to the person of her husband, she, Mrs. Wollstonecraft, might claim, and, for congeniality of sentiments and talents, hold a place in his heart, for 'she hoped,' she said, 'to unite herself to his mind.' . . .
>
> At length Mrs. Wollstonecraft appears to have grown desperate, for she had the temerity to go to Mrs. Fuseli, and to tell her that she wished to become an inmate in her family: and she added, 'as I am above deceit, it is right to say that this proposal arises from the sincere affection that I have for your husband, for I feel that I cannot live without the satisfaction of seeing and conversing with him daily.' . . . This frank avowal immediately opened the eyes of Mrs. Fuseli, who . . . not only refused her solicitation, but she instantly forbade her the house. No resource was now left to Mrs. Wollstonecraft, but to fly from the object which she regarded: her determination was instantly fixed; she wrote a letter to Fuseli, in which she begged pardon 'for having disturbed the quiet tenour of his life,' and on the 8th of December 1792, left London for Paris.
>
> All communication ceased between the parties from this time until after Mrs. Wollstonecraft's marriage with Mr. Godwin. Fuseli noticed this

occurrence in a letter to a friend, in the following terms: 'You have not, perhaps, heard that the assertrix of female rights has given her hand to the *balancier* of political justice.'

Fuseli saw Mrs. Godwin but seldom; he dined only once at her table. Indeed, this lady did not live very long to enjoy the happiness she had pictured to herself, in being the wife of a man of genius and talents; for she died on the 10th September 1797, after giving birth to a female child,[1] who has proved herself, by works of imagination, to be worthy of her parents. Fuseli could not but feel much regret on the occasion; but as 'grief does not give utterance in words,' so he barely noticed the catastrophe in the postscript of a letter to Mr. Roscoe, in these terms.—'Poor Mary!'

The letters which Mary wrote to Fuseli during this period, and which Knowles says 'he would allow . . . to be some days unopened in his pocket,' seem to have disappeared—at least I have not been able to discover them. Fuseli apparently kept them, although Mary, in a letter she wrote to him in October 1796, and which will later appear, asked him to return them, for 'it must be the same to you.' Godwin also tried to get Fuseli to return them, perhaps when he was writing *Memoirs*. For this attempt I have MS. evidence:

> Godwin went to Fuseli for her letters to him. Fuseli opened a drawer, showed the packets and then shut the drawer saying 'Damn you, that is all you will see of them.'[2]

[1] Mrs. Bysshe Shelley.

[2] C.G.M.G. MS. This, and other brief notes to follow are written in the hand of the late Rt. Hon. Charles George Milnes Gaskell (1842-1919), P.C., LL.D., M.A., D.L., J.P.,

I can trace these elusive letters down to 1884, but at that date or a few years later, they disappear. Knowles, as Fuseli's literary executor, received them in 1825, and must have had them until the publication of his biography in 1831. The next trace I find is a letter in *Notes and Queries* (4th S. VI. November 19, 1870, p. 434).

LETTERS OF MARY WOLLSTONCRAFT

Let me make a note in your columns (as Mary Wollstonecraft's name has lately been mentioned there) that I have the autograph letters written by her to Fuseli.

Kenilworth. E. H. KNOWLES.

In 1884 these letters were in the possession of Sir Percy Florence Shelley, Mary's grandson. He had probably noticed Knowles' note, and purchased them. Elizabeth Robins Pennell writes me :

of Thornes House, Yorks, on the fly-leaf of his copy of the second edition of the *Memoirs* now in my possession. As unquestionable authority he cites as his source Mrs. Procter, *née* Skepper, b. 1799, daughter of Thomas Skepper of York, wife of Bryan Waller Procter (1787-1874), 'Barry Cornwall.' Miss Skepper's mother, as a widow, married Basil Montagu, Mary's good friend, making Miss Skepper Montagu's step-daughter. Miss S. is spoken of as 'a lady of great gifts both social and intellectual,' and Procter's biographer says that after her marriage to Procter, 'by her brilliant qualities she made his house one of the chief centres of London society for a space of nearly half a century.' They were married in 1824, and in 1825 and for several years after, the Procters lived with the Montagus at 25 Bedford Square. Since Basil Montagu (1770-1851) was an intimate friend of both Mary and Godwin, his step-daughter must have received the information at first hand. Mr. Milnes Gaskell dated his notes December 29 and 30, 1887.

> When I wrote my book all the Wollstonecraft and Shelley MSS. were in the possession of Sir Percy Florence Shelley. . . . After my book was published—or at the last minute before it was issued—I learned that among these things were Mary's correspondence with Fuseli. I wrote to Sir Percy to ask him if he would allow me to publish these letters, or, at least, to see them. But he was not willing. He wrote very politely but without giving me the least hope that he would change his mind.

To whom the letters passed or where they now are, I have been unable to discover.

For 1789 I can mention only one book by Mary, but can give one of her noble letters. The book is *The Female Reader*, a compilation on the plan of Enfield's *Speaker*, into which, her publisher Johnson says, she introduced 'some original pieces, and prefixed a preface to it.' I can give no clue to these, as the only copy of *The Female Reader* that I know of is in the British Museum.

The letter was written to a 'Mr. Cristall,' about the welfare of whose 'amiable sister' Mary expresses considerable solicitude. This is probably that Ann Batten Cristall whose name is written on the title-page of Locker-Lampson's copy of the novel *Mary*, and whose book of poems [3] was reviewed in *The Analytical Review* (22 : 326). This lady was a friend of Southey, who writes that she is 'a fine, artless, sensible girl,' and that 'her heart is alive, she loves retirement, she loves the country . . . she has genius.'

[3] *Poems* by Ann Batten Cristall. (Johnson.) The British Museum attributes to this woman a volume entitled *Poetical Sketches* (London 1795) which is probably the same book.

Mary's letter is addressed to :

Mr. Cristall,
Mr. Turner's China Manufacture
near Brosely Salop.

London, March 19th (1789).

I was a little angry with you for sending a copy of Mr. Blood's letter to Charles ; but I will let my resentment subside for the present and only write about your own affairs. I think you ingenious—yet I am afraid that you are too sanguine in your expectation of succeeding as an artist.—Besides abilities a happy concurrence of circumstances is necessary to enable a painter to earn a livelihood—and many years of anxiety and painful industry must be passed before a man of superior talents can look with any certainty for tomorrow's subsistence ; you admired Mr. Horne's pictures, yet he was obliged to leave the kingdom, because he could not get employment—and Mr. F. with his original genius and uncommon diligence had a very precarious support till the Shakespearian plan commenced. In short I could mention many other instances, but it appears unnecessary—for you will not put yourself on a par with Mr. Horne I am sure —however my arguments are not brought forward to discourage you from following in some degree your bent.—I only wish to caution you against the headstrong ardour of youth. Pursue your studies, practice as much as you can, but do not think of depending on painting for a subsistence before you know the first rudiments of the art. I know that you earnestly wish to be the friend and protector of your amiable sister and hope no inconsiderate act or thoughtless mode of conduct will add to her cares—for her comfort very much depends on you.

I find Mr. Turner intends to send you to travel for him very soon ; this will in every respect be a

great advantage to you,—you will see the country, form connexions and have more leisure to improve. Pray let me hear from you soon, and tell me what you intend to do and I will candidly give you my opinion and as I have more experience than you it may be useful to you. I now write in a hurry—because the post is going out, but I wish I could forcibly represent to you the necessity of following your inclinations with caution. A manly character is of the greatest importance in any line—and if you determine to leave Mr. Turner when your time expires I hope you will be careful not to quarrel with him.

Charles is now at Cork eating the bread of idleness, and living on the kindness of relations who do not respect him. His example ought to impress you—it is a great disadvantage to a young man to be thought unsettled. How do you come on with your Music and Drawing.—You scarcely know what industry is required to arrive at a degree of perfection in the fine arts, and how dreadful it is to plunge into the world without friends or acknowledged abilities. I have lately made some enquiries, and I think it will be next to madness for you to launch out before you have made any preparatory steps. London is not now paved with gold and a false step in the beginning of life frequently th(r)ows a gloomy cloud over the fairest hopes. If you determine to endeavour to become a painter—declare your intention to your Master, father and friends in a manly manner, when you have arranged to do so, and act with firmness instead of rashness, I shall then begin to think that you have some chance to succeed—a wise man may be rash—but only a strong understanding may enable a youth to act with firmness. Should I perceive such strength of mind in you I shall suppose that you follow the impulse of nature and are not led

away by unprincipled wishes—wild desires (of) which nature you selfishly forgot your sister's peace of mind—and your own future advantage, virtue is self-denial—if you cannot bear some present inconvenience you are a common man and will never arise to any degree of eminence in anything you undertake. I am yours

M. W.[4]

There are two reasons for assigning this letter to 1789. In the first place Charles ' now at Cork eating the bread of idleness,' she ' placed with a farmer for instruction ' before sending him to America in ' the latter end of 1792,' and I am inclined to date her reference to him in Cork about two or three years before he finally sailed. The second reason is that the ' Shakespearian plan ' which benefited F.(useli) was begun in 1786, and its first exhibition, in the Shakespeare Gallery, Pall Mall, occurred in 1789, with thirty-four paintings. *The Analytical Review*, October 1788 (2 : 234-6) carried, under the heading The Arts, an article not signed, but (I feel sure) written by Mary, from which the following may be quoted :

In the commencement of this work we promised to notice the progressive steps of the Fine Arts, and we are happy to congratulate the public on the turn which the age is likely to give to the execution of painting and engraving. The magnificent scheme of Messrs. Boydell, for a series of pictures from Shakespeare, will of course present itself here to all who claim acquaintance with the productions

[4] This letter has never before been printed. The original is in The Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California, and my transcript was taken from a photostat reproduction.

of taste. The proposals of his plan dispersed over these kingdoms, and probably over all Europe, render it unnecessary for us to enter into a minute detail of this intended edition of our great poet, and leave us at liberty to prepare our readers, by an account of the pictures already finished or sketched out, for the pleasure they may promise themselves at the magnificent saloons, which are now preparing for their exhibition.

Sir Joshua Reynolds has nearly finished the terrific scene of the Death of Cardinal Beaufort, from the second part of Henry VI.

Mr. West has painted a scene of Lear in the Storm; of which an engraving is begun by Mr. Sharpe.

She gives four lines to Barry; three lines to the combination of Romney, Gilpin and Hodges—all working on the scenery of the Forest of Arden; and then these eight lines to Fuseli:

Mr. Fuseli has finished pictures of Lear renouncing Cordelia, now engraving by Mr. Earlom; of Macbeth and Banquo addressing the Witches in the Storm; intended, as the proposals tell us, for Mr. Bartalozzi; of Hamlet following the Ghost of his Father; of Henry the Fifth discovering the Conspiracy of Scroop, Cambridge and Grey; and the same artist, we understand, is preparing a scene from the *Midsummer Night's Dream* of Titania introducing her fairies to Bottom.

Mary allows Opie and the Rev. Mr. Peters three lines each; five to Northcote; Hamilton three; Rigaud, Downman, Wheatly and Durno two each. She then concludes with this paragraph:

...It is certainly to be wished, that in the progress of so great, we will say, so national a plan,

as much attention as possible might be exerted to choose such subjects, such moments, as distinguish Shakespeare from all other poets, and set him above all rivalship; but whether that be attainable or not, we should consider ourselves as egregiously deviating from our plan, were we to obtrude on the public our individual opinion of the comparative merits of the pictures already painted, till by exhibition they are become the property of general criticism. We shall only observe that we consider the plan of Messrs. Boydell as a nursery of historic painting, as a hint towards the true method of calling forth the grandeur of art in a country whose religion, climate, and fashions, have hitherto repressed it; and as a full refutation of that imputed sterility of genius with which the criticism of the continent has hitherto branded the production of Britain.

"Look, what a fine morning it is!"

From the original drawing by William Blake

(*cf.* below, pp. 207-11)

IV

1790-1791

RICHARD PRICE *v.* EDMUND BURKE. *A VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MEN.*

In 1789 and 1790 a three-cornered battle was joined between Mary's friend Dr. Richard Price, Edmund Burke and Mary herself. Dr. Price was the originator of the trouble. On November 4, 1789, he delivered a 'Discourse' at the meeting-house in Old Jewry to the Society for Commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain (of 1688). This speech was printed the same year.[1] Only the last page or two touch on the French revolution, but these contained passages that helped to provoke Burke to his famous *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Two, in particular, roused the great orator's hostility. The first is this:

> This Society has, very properly, in its Reports, held out these principles, as an instruction to the

[1] *A Discourse on the Love of our Country*, Delivered on Nov. 4, 1789. At the Meeting-House in the Old Jewry, To the Society for Commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain. By Richard Price, D.D., LL.D., F.R.S., and Fellow of the American Philosophical Societies at Philadelphia and Boston. 8vo. 64 pp. Price 3s. 6d. Cadell. 1789.

public. I will only take notice of the three following:

First: The right to liberty of conscience in religious matters.

Secondly: The right to resist power when abused, And

Thirdly: The right to chuse our own governors; to cashier them for misconduct; and to frame a government for ourselves.

And the second:

What an eventful period is this! I am thankful that I have lived to it; and I could almost say, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* I have lived to see a diffusion of knowledge, which has undermined superstition and error. I have lived to see the rights of men better understood than ever; and nations panting for liberty, which seemed to have lost the idea of it.—I have lived to see THIRTY MILLIONS of people, indignant and resolute, spurning at slavery, and demanding liberty with an irresistible voice; their king led in triumph, and an arbitrary monarch surrendering himself to his subjects. After sharing in the benefits of one Revolution, I have been spared to be a witness to two other Revolutions, both glorious. And now, methinks, I see the ardour of liberty catching and spreading; a general amendment beginning in human affairs; the dominion of kings changed for the dominion of laws, and the dominion of priests giving way to the dominion of reason and conscience. . . .'

Burke's book, although long expected, did not appear until November 1, 1790.[2]

[2] *Reflections / on the / Revolution in France, / and on the / Proceedings in Certain Societies / in London / Relative to that Event.* / In a / Letter / intended to have been sent

He comments on Price's ' principles ' :

> This new, and hitherto unheard of, bill of rights though made in the name of the whole people, belongs to those gentlemen and their faction only. The body of the people of England have no share in it. They utterly disclaim it.

His tremendous denunciation of the barbarities of the revolutionary mob is too well known to need quotation here, but it may be remarked that Dr. Price, in the preface to the fourth edition of his *Discourse*, maintained that he was alluding to the destruction of the Bastille in July 1789 and not, as Burke in his fierce response assumed, to the seizure of the king and queen on October 6. The point is not of great importance, but helps to explain some part of Mary's vehemence in her counter-attack on Burke.

This counter-attack was made without loss of time. Two editions of her *A Vindication of the Rights of Men, In a Letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, Occasioned by his Reflections on the Revolution in France*, appeared in November and December 1790, preceded by the anonymous ' Short Observations on the Right Honourable Edmund Burke's Reflections,' and by ' A Letter to the Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke, in Reply to his Reflections on the French Revolution, By a Member of the Revolution Society.'

Her Advertisement, and a few brief passages from the early pages of the text, will indicate the manner in which she made her assault.

to a Gentleman / in Paris. / By the Right Honourable Edmund Burke. / (printer's line) / London : / Printed for J. Dodsley in Pall-Mall. / M.DCC.XC.

Advertisement.

Mr. Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution first engaged my attention as the transient topic of the day; and reading it more for amusement than information, my indignation was roused by the sophistical arguments, that every moment crossed me, in the questionable shape of natural feelings and common sense.

Many pages of the following letter were the effusions of the moment; but, swelling considerably in size, the idea was suggested of publishing a short Vindication of the Rights of Men. But not having leisure or patience to follow this desultory writer through all the devious tracks in which his fancy started fresh game, I have confined my strictures, in a great measure, to the grand principles at which he has levelled many ingenious arguments in a very specious garb.

A
Letter
to the
Right Honourable Edmund Burke

Sir,

It is not necessary, with courtly insincerity, to apologise to you for thus intruding on your precious time, nor to profess that I think it an honour to discuss an important subject with a man whose literary abilities have raised him to notice in the state. I have not yet learned to twist my periods, nor, in the equivocal idiom of politeness, to disguise my sentiments, and imply what I should be afraid to utter: if, therefore, in the course of this epistle, I chance to express contempt, and even indignation, with some emphasis, I beseech you to believe that it was not a flight of fancy; for truth, in morals, has ever appeared to me the essence of the sublime;

and, in taste, simplicity, the only criterion of the beautiful. But I war not with an individual when I contend for the *rights of men* and the liberty of reason.

I glow with indignation when I attempt, methodically, to unravel your slavish paradoxes, in which I can find no fixed principle to refute; I shall not, therefore, condescend to show you where you affirm in one page what you deny in another; and how frequently you draw conclusions without any previous premises:—it would be something like cowardice to fight with a man who had never exercised the weapons which his opponent chose to combat with.

I know that you have a mortal antipathy to reason; but, if there is any thing like argument, or first principles, in your *wild* declamation, behold the result:—that we are to reverence the rust of antiquity, and term the unnatural customs, which ignorance and mistaken self-interest have consolidated, the sage fruit of experience; and that, if we do discover some errors, our feelings should lead us to excuse, with blind love, or unprincipled filial affection, the venerable vestiges of ancient days. These are gothic notions of beauty—the ivy is beautiful though it insidiously destroys the trunk from which it receives support.

Mary opened her defence of Dr. Price against Burke's violent attack with these remarks:

In reprobating Dr. Price's opinions you might have spared the man; and if you had had but half as much reverence for the grey hairs of virtue as for the accidental distinctions of rank, you would not have treated with such indecent familiarity and supercilious contempt, a member of the community whose talents and modest virtues place him high in the scale of moral excellence. I am

not accustomed to look up with vulgar awe, even when mental superiority exalts a man above his fellows; but still the sight of a man whose habits are fixed by piety and reason, and virtues consolidated into goodness, commands my homage—and I should touch his errors with a tender hand when I made a parade of my sensibility. . . .

I could almost fancy that I now see the respectable old man, in his pulpit, with hands clasped, and eyes devoutly fixed, praying with all the simple energy of unaffected piety; or, when more erect, inculcating the dignity of virtue, and enforcing the doctrines his life adorns; benevolence animated each feature, and persuasion attuned his accents, the preacher grew eloquent, who only laboured to be clear; and the respect that he extorted, seemed only the respect due to personified virtue and matured wisdom. Is this the man you brand with so many opprobrious epithets, he whose private life will stand the test of the strictest enquiry—away with such unmanly sarcasms and puerile concepts——.

As Mary approached the conclusion of her reply to Burke, the vehement indignation with which she began it seems to have waned. She indulged in many observations, which, without a close examination of the context (and sometimes even with it), appear to have little relevance to her subject. But even these digressions are not without interest—particularly the one that, as evidence of Mary's mysticism, has been quoted in the Preface.[3]

G. R. Stirling Taylor makes admirable comment on Mary's reply:

Mary threw herself on her opponent with the rush of a cavalry charge. It is one of the most dashing

[3] Above, p. xxxviii.

political polemics in the language, and has not had the attention it deserves. Her biographers do not often quote it: one wonders if they have ever read it. For sheer virility and grip of her verbal instruments it is probably the finest of her works. Some of her sentences have the quality of a sword-edge, and they flash with the rapidity of a practised duellist.

. . . Mary Wollstonecraft, lately a distressed school mistress, who was of interest to few people except her creditors, danced the mighty Edmund Burke through the air as one would a toy balloon. She tossed him up with contemptuous satire, and pulled him down again by the string of ruthless logic. Her essay, though now too much forgotten, at that time struck home.[4]

Mary published two other books in 1790—the first and very scarce two-volume edition of *Elements of Morality*, which Mary chose for translating as an aid in learning German; and an edition of *Young Grandison*, Translated from the Dutch of Madame de Cambon, with Alterations and Improvements. Her share in this book was confined to the 'Alterations and Improvements,' although she is reported practically to have re-written the book in carrying out her emendations. The translation had already been done by Rev. John Hall, Minister of the Scottish Church in Rotterdam.

The relative order of publication of these works I cannot determine, for I have found no review or notice of the *Elements* in its original form. The book

[4] *Mary Wollstonecraft / A Study in Economics and Romance* / By G. R. Stirling Taylor / Illustrated with Portraits in Photogravure / London : / Martin Secker / Number Five John Street Adelphi / MCMXI.

itself is so wholly unknown that perhaps, like Blake's *French Revolution*, it was set up in type by Johnson in 1791, and only one copy of proofs struck off. *Young Grandison* appeared probably in September. From the reviews it seems to have been an interesting work for juvenile readers, but it was never reprinted.

I quote a passage from Mary's 'Introductory Address to Parents' in *Elements of Morality*, because it provoked several adverse criticisms from hostile Tory periodicals, and gave Thomas Taylor, 'the Platonist,' an excuse for his scurrilous parody *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes*.

> In the course of the book, I have, I hope, treated all moral subjects with which children ought to be acquainted, excepting one.
>
> I would willingly have said something of chastity and impurity; for impurity is now spread so far, that even children are infected; and by it the seeds of every virtue, as well as the germ of their posterity, which the Creator has implanted in them for wise purposes, are weakened or destroyed. I am thoroughly persuaded that the most efficacious method to root out this dreadful evil, which poisons the source of human happiness, would be to speak to children of the organs of generation as freely as we speak of the other parts of the body, and explain to them the noble use which they were designed for, and how they may be injured.
>
> I have conversed with the most sensible schoolmasters on this subject, and they have confirmed me in my opinion; but I also know that my conviction will not have sufficient weight with the public to conquer long-fostered prejudices, and that many people would have been shocked at tales, which might early in life have accustomed their

children to see the dreadful consequences of incontinence; I have therefore been induced to leave them out, lest my book should be entirely useless to many parents and teachers.[5]

It may have been this passage which led the American publishers, J. Hoff and H. Kammerer, Jun., to seek permission to print from a high authority, before they published in two volumes the 1796 Philadelphia edition. They printed in the first volume of this edition the following amusing letter:

University of Pennsylvania,
March 11, 1796.

Sir,

Having attentively perused the Books which you put into our hands a few weeks ago, entitled 'Elements of Morality,' etc., by C. G. Salzmann, we are of opinion that you will run no risk in reprinting it. It is certainly a valuable work; and cannot fail to be acceptable to all parents, who are aware of the importance of cultivating and improving the affections, as well as the understanding, of their children.

With due respect, we are, Sir, yours, etc.,

John Andrews, D.D., Vice Provost and Professor of Moral Philosophy.
James Davidson, A.M., Professor of the Latin and Greek Languages.
Robert Patterson, A.M., Professor of Mathematics.
William Rogers, D.D., Professor of English and Belles Lettres.

A note in Mr. Johnson's autograph, which was included with the Shelley MS., and thence printed by

[5] *Elements of Morality*, 3 vols. 1791: i. pp. xiii, xiv in 'Introductory Address to Parents.'

Kegan Paul,[6] tells in a few words much about Mary at this epoch and her benevolence.

> She entered upon her house in George St. at Michaelmas 1787, and continued there till Michaelmas 1791.
>
> Here she wrote the *Rights of Woman*. A translation from the Dutch of *Young Grandison* was put into her hands, which she almost re-wrote. She translated *Necker on Religious Opinions*, compiled the *Female Reader*, introducing some original pieces, and prefixed a preface to it. She began a novel under the title of the *Cave of Fancy*, wrote many articles in the *Analytical Review :—Answer to Burke*, *Elements of Morality from the German*, which she first studied here, and a translation of *Lavater's Physiognomy* from the French.
>
> Her brothers and sisters were occasionally with her when they were unsettled. Hers was their home ; and she took every method to improve and prepare them for respectable situations. She consulted with Mr. Barlow,[7] on the probability of getting a farm in America for Charles, which was determined upon, and he was placed with a farmer here for instruction. He left England the latter end of 1792. James, who had been at sea, was sent to Woolwich for a few months to be under Mr. Bonnycastle, and afterwards on board Lord Hood's fleet as a midshipman, where he was presently made a lieutenant. Much of the instruction which all of them obtained was obtained under her own roof, and most, if not all, of the situations which her sisters procured were by her exertions. In the beginning of 1788 she sent Everina to Paris for improvement in the language.

[6] *William Godwin*, i. 193, 4.

[7] Joel Barlow, 1754-1812, an account of whom will be given later.

During her stay in George Street she spent many of her afternoons and most of her evenings with me. She was incapable of disguise. Whatever was the state of her mind, it appeared when she entered, and the tone of conversation might easily be guessed. When harassed, which was very often the case, she was relieved by unbosoming herself, and generally returned home calm, frequently in spirits.

In a part of this period, which certainly was the most active of her life, she had the care of her father's estate, which was attended with no little trouble to both of us. She could not during this time, I think, expend less than £200 on her brothers and sisters.

At Michaelmas 1791 she went to Store Street, and continued till December 1792. She then went to Paris.

Johnson's reference to Mary's brothers encourages me to comment, in passing, on the wife of one of them who also was a Mary Wollstonecraft.

Charles, her second brother, was sent by Mary to America towards the end of the year 1792, and first engaged in farming somewhere near Philadelphia. When Mary's friend, the expatriated Irishman, Archibald Hamilton Rowan, arrived in Philadelphia in the summer of 1795 he soon decided to go to Wilmington, and started a calico printing mill near that place, in which business Charles joined him. In 1798 he enlisted in the United States Army.

Heitman's *Historical Register* [8] (unauthorised but reliable), gives a summary account of his service :

[8] *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, from its Organization, Sept. 29, 1789, to March 2, 1903.* By Francis B. Heitman. Washington : Government Printing Office, 1903.

Wollstonecraft, Charles. Born in England; enlisted from Pennsylvania. 2d lt. artillery and engineers, 4 June 1798; artillery, 1 April 1802; captain 15 March 1805; transferred to artillery corps 12 May 1814; brevet major 15 March 1815 for 10 years faithful service in one grade; died 28 September 1817.

But it is in a quaint old volume, entitled *Female Biography; Containing Notices of Distinguished Women in Different Nations and Ages* (Boston, 1833), that I find reference to Charles Wollstonecraft's wife. This book is a compilation by one Samuel Lorenzo Knapp (1783-1838), also the author of anonymous *Letters of Shahcoolon, A Hindo* (Boston, 1802), which volume contains many scurrilous references to our much maligned heroine.

In Knapp's *Female Biography* I found an account of 'Mary Wollstonecraft,' and I expected (not unnaturally) a somewhat garbled record of my heroine's career. But the notice proved to be concerned, not with her but with her sister-in-law! This lady had probably heard so much from her husband about his sister that she apparently moulded herself into a sort of pathetic caricature of the original. Knapp says:

> Mary Wolstoncraft, the wife of Major Wolstoncraft, of the United States Army, was the daughter of a New England clergyman. She was the second wife of the major, he having been divorced from the first. They lived together in New Orleans several years before the major's death; and Mary, among other duties, was devoted to the education of a daughter of his, by his first wife. . . . Her husband . . . was thought to be a man of great

wealth, but which was in a degree lost by his death ; for when a speculator of many concerns dies suddenly, the thousand things which drop from his hands are with difficulty gathered up by any one, however sagacious ; but bad as it was, she realized something. . . .

Mrs. Wollstonecraft went back to her home in New England, but 'found the winters too severe for a constitution so long accustomed to warmer suns, and she made purchase of estates, and took up her residence in the island of Cuba.' From here

> 'She wrote a series of letters upon Cuba, evincing more knowledge of the soil, climate, productions, manners and customs of the inhabitants, than any other one who has written on the subject. . . . Mrs. Wolstonecraft held a most vigorous pen, as the letters from Cuba, and the article on the "Rights of Women," published in the *Boston Monthly Magazine*, in 1825, will fully show. She had no sympathy in the religious sentiments of Mary Wolstonecraft the wife of Godwin, her husband's sister, but she wrote on the rights of women, with quite as much force, and more justice. Seldom have we read an article of more pith and point than the one we allude to from her pen.' [9]

Knapp goes on to say she regretted 'that she must leave this world before she could do some good in

[9] Mr. Walter B. Briggs, Assistant Librarian, Harvard College Library, kindly informs me that this article, under the title 'The National Rights of Woman,' signed 'D'Anville,' actually appeared in the number of the *Boston Monthly Magazine* for August 1825 (1 : 126-35) ; and also informs me that Knapp himself was the editor and proprietor of this periodical, which expired, after fourteen numbers, in July 1826. This fact probably indicates that the article was printed rather out of friendship than from any literary merit.

raising the condition of her sex in the mental world. She indulged in severe remarks upon the course of female education, as she had seen it. . . . The United States furnished her with a sufficient number of facts . . . as to the insufficiency of the education of young females. . . . She was bent on enlightening the female mind, and she thought that this should be done in the most direct and plain language. . . . Mrs. W. died a few years since in Cuba.'

UNNAMED AND UNUSED ILLUSTRATION FOR "ORIGINAL STORIES FROM REAL LIFE"

From the original drawing by William Blake

(*cf.* below, pp. 207-11)

V

1791-1793

ORIGINAL STORIES FROM REAL LIFE—A VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN— VISIT TO PARIS—MEETING WITH IMLAY—MARY'S FRIENDS.

For the year 1791 I have found only three incidents in which Mary was concerned. 'In September . . . she removed from the house she occupied in George Street, to a large and commodious apartment in Store Street, Bedford Square.' In November she first met Godwin. He has recorded this meeting in *Memoirs*: and at the time it occurred he made this entry in his diary:

> Nov. 13. Su. Correct. Dyson and Dibdin call; talk of virtue and disinterest. Dine at Johnson's with Paine, Shovet and Wolstencraft; talk of monarchy, Tooke, Johnson, Voltaire, pursuits and religion. Sup at Holcroft's.

The third happening was the new issue of *Original Stories from Real Life*, adorned for the first time with Blake's six illustrations, designed and engraved by himself.

Of the ten original drawings reproduced in the

present volume only five served as models for the engravings published in this 1791 edition of *Original Stories*. The sixth (that facing p. 114—the graceful figure approaching the little hut in which the harper plays [1]) was made from an original that does not form part of Mr. Newton's series and has already been reproduced, though only as a woodcut, by Gilchrist in his *Life of William Blake* (see above, p. 3).

Gilchrist speaks depreciatingly of this little volume both in respect to the text and the engravings. He claims that it is written in the style of 'the then prevailing Berquin School,' and the design he calls 'naive and crude.' They 'can hardly be pronounced a successful competition with Stothard,' though 'traces of a higher feeling are visible in the graceful female forms—benevolent heroine, or despairing, famished peasant group.' 'The artist,' he says, 'moves in constraint, and the accessories of these domestic scenes are as simply generalised as a child's. He also remarks that 'the book itself never went to a second edition.' Yet the book, so far as text is concerned, was even then in its second printing, and before Gilchrist wrote it had been reprinted eight different times in London, Paris, Dublin and Chiswick. He goes on :

> More designs appear to have been made for this little work than were found available, and some of

[1] Mr. S. Foster Damon, in *William Blake : His Philosophy and Symbols*, says of this picture : 'When Mrs. Mason, that early and terrible example of the British matron, comes upon an old Welsh harper by night, Blake could not be literal. Something in the stilted prose stirred his poetic sense ; so he changed the solid Mrs. Mason to a slender, ethereal girl wandering in a starlit garden, while the old man appeared as a radiant angel harping among Gothic ruins.'

the best were among the rejected. It may interest the reader to have a sample of Blake in this comparatively humble department. Possessing most of the original drawings, we therefore give a print from one.

Here he displayed, as a wood-cut, the plate numbered V. in the following group. His comment on this picture is there given.

I shall give briefly the passages in *Original Stories* which Blake intended these drawings to illustrate.

I

Every prospect smiled.

One fine morning in spring, some time after Mary and Caroline were settled in their new abode, Mrs. Mason proposed a walk before breakfast, a custom she wished to teach imperceptibly, by rendering it amusing.

The sun had scarcely dispelled the dew that hung on every blade of grass, and filled the half-shut flowers; every prospect smiled . . . (Chap. I. p. (1)).

This picture was not engraved for *Original Stories*. It is here first reproduced (see above, p. 137).

II

God cares for them.

. . . Mary began to be attentive, and quickly followed Mrs. Mason's example, and allowed a caterpillar and a spider to creep on her hand. You find them, she rejoined, very harmless; but a great number would destroy our vegetables and fruit; so birds are permitted to eat them, as we feed on animals, and in spring there are always more than at any other season of the year, to furnish food for

the young broods.—Half convinced, Mary said, but worms are of little consequence in the world. Yet, replied Mrs. Mason, God cares for them. . . . (Chap. I. pp. 4, 5.)

This drawing was not engraved for *Original Stories*. It is one of the two that Geoffrey Keynes reproduced in his *Bibliography of William Blake*, published for the Grolier Club (see above, p. 155).

III

How delighted the old bird will be.

The party of three had met a boy with a nest in his hand; they saw the mother bird perched on a tree near by, uttering 'intelligible tones of anguish,' and—

Caroline called him, and taking sixpence out of her little purse, offered to give it to him for the nest, if he would shew her where he had taken it from. The boy consented, and away ran Caroline to replace it—crying all the way, how delighted the old bird will be to find her brood again. . . . (Chap. I. p. 9.)

This drawing was not engraved for *Original Stories*. It is the second drawing that Geoffrey Keynes reproduced in his *Bibliography of William Blake* (see above, p. 171).

IV

Look, what a fine morning it is—Insects, Birds and Animals are all enjoying existence.

'Now,' said Mrs. Mason, 'we will return to breakfast; give me your hands, my little girls, you have done good this morning, you have acted like rational creatures.

> Look, what a fine morning it is. Insects, birds, and animals, are all enjoying this sweet day. Thank God for permitting me to see it, and for giving you an understanding which teaches you that you ought, by doing good, to imitate him. (Chap. I. p. 10.)

This Blake engraved for the frontispiece of *Original Stories*, where it bears the above caption (see above, p. 193).

V

For this drawing I can neither supply chapter nor verse. I have searched thoroughly through every tragic incident related in these *Stories*—and they are many—without finding one that this drawing can be supposed to interpret. I am of the firm opinion that this is a product of Blake's own imagination, and that he meant it to bear the same relation to the beautiful group of three graceful figures shown in IV. preceding that his *Songs of Experience* do to his *Songs of Innocence*, even if he has brought in a boy changeling.

Gilchrist says of it :

> There is . . . a terrible extremity of voiceless despair in the upturned face of the principal figure, which perhaps no hand but that of him who conceived it could adequately reproduce.

This drawing was not engraved for *Original Stories*. Gilchrist reproduced it as a wood-cut in his *Life of William Blake*, 1863, i. 91 (see above, p. 207).

VI

She turned her eyes on her cruel master.

A bitch had once all her litter stolen from her, and drowned in a neighbouring brook; she sought them out, and brought them one by one, laid them at the feet of her cruel master;—and looking wistfully at them for some time, in dumb anguish, turning her eyes on the destroyer, she expired! (Chap. II. p. 18.)

This drawing was not engraved for *Original Stories*, and is here first reproduced (see below, p. 259).

VII

The Dog strove to attract his attention. He said, Thou wilt not leave me.

This is for the story of 'crazy Robin,' who was pursued by misfortune. 'Several of his children died in their infancy, and . . . one misfortune had followed another till he had sunk under their accumulated weight.' His wife caught cold; and

through neglect, and her want of proper nourishment, her illness turned to a putrid fever; which two of the children caught from her, and died with her. The two who were left, Jacky and Nancy, went to their father, and took with them a cur dog, that had long shared their frugal meals.

The children begged in the day, and at night slept with their wretched father. Poverty and dirt soon robbed their cheeks of the roses which the country air made bloom with a peculiar freshness; so that they soon caught a jail fever, and died. The poor father, who was now bereft of all his children, hung over their bed in speechless anguish;

not a groan or a tear escaped from him, whilst he stood, two or three hours, in the same attitude, looking at the dead bodies of his little darlings. The dog licked his hands, and strove to attract his attention; but for awhile he seemed not to observe his caresses; when he did, he said mournfully, thou wilt not leave me—and then he began to laugh. (Chap. III. pp. 23, 4.)

Blake engraved this for *Original Stories*. It faces p. 24 (see below, p. 272).

VIII

Indeed we are very happy!

This story is for the story of 'honest Jack, the sailor' who 'lost the use of his limbs' from 'standing in the water so long' after the ship has been 'dashed against the rocks.'

We catch fish for Madam [Mason], and I watch for a storm, hoping some time or other to be as kind to a poor perishing soul as she has been to me. Indeed we are very happy—I might now have been begging about the streets, but for Madam, God bless her. (Chap. VIII. p. 74.)

Blake engraved this for *Original Stories*. It faces p. 74 (see below, p. 298).

IX

Be calm, my child, remember that you must do all the good you can the present day.

But the night will overtake us, we must make haste home. Give me your hand, Mary, you tremble; surely I need not desire you to remember this story—Be calm, my child, and remember that you must attend to trifles; do all the good you can

the present day, nay hour, if you would keep your conscience clear. This circumspection may not produce dazzling actions, nor will your silent virtue be supported by human applause; but your Father, who seeth in secret, will reward you. (Chap. X. p. 94.)

Blake engraved this for *Original Stories*. It faces p. 94 (see below, p. 310).

X

Economy and self-denial are necessary, in every station, to enable us to be generous.

Mrs. Mason desired the woman to call on her the next day, and they left the family cheered by their bounty.

Caroline expected the reproof that soon proceeded from the mouth of her true friend. I am glad that this accident has occured (*sic*), to prove to you that prodigality and generosity are incompatible. Æconomy (*sic*) and self-denial are necessary in every station, to enable us to be generous, and to act conformably to the rules of justice. (Chap. XXIV. p. 173.)

Blake engraved this for *Original Stories*. It faces p. 173 (see below, p. 327).

Mary's next, and best known book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*, may have been issued as early as December 1791, for the *Monthly Review* noticed it in January. But I am inclined to think that it did not actually appear until 1792.

Her dedication 'To M. Talleyrand-Perigord, Late Bishop of Autun,' begins:

> Sir,
>
> Having read with great pleasure a pamphlet, which you have lately published, on National Education, I dedicate this volume to you—the first dedication I have ever written, to induce you to read it with attention. . . .

Curiously enough, Talleyrand himself was in England between January and March 1792, and while he was in London Mary entertained him in her new 'large and commodious apartment' in Bedford Square, and served him tea and wine. It would be interesting reading if Mary had kept some notes of their conversation; but she never mentions the meeting. John Knowles is the only authority for it.

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman has been reprinted sixteen times, the latest in 1892—a round century after its first appearance—and since copies are available at any bookshop or library, I propose to omit quotations altogether, confining any mention of the book to a few contemporary and later opinions.

First, the Mrs. Trimmer whom Mary had found 'a truly respectable woman.' Mrs. Trimmer's husband died on May 15, 1792, and on the 12th July she wrote to a friend:

> Of *The Rights of Woman* I can say nothing more than that I found so much happiness in having a husband to assist me in forming a proper judgment and in taking upon him the chief labour of providing for a family that I never wished for a further degree of liberty or consequence than I enjoyed. Miss Woolstonecraft is a woman of

extraordinary abilities, I confess; I cannot help thinking they might be employed to more advantage to society. But my recent misfortune has almost obliterated the remembrance of the contents of her book.

Hannah More, though without a husband to assist her 'in forming a proper judgment,' had very much the same idea. She wrote to Horace Walpole:

I have been much pestered to read the *Rights of Woman*, but am invincibly resolved not to do it. Of all jargon, I hate metaphysical jargon; beside, there is something fantastic and absurd in the very title. How many ways there are of being ridiculous! I am sure I have as much liberty as I can make good use of, now I am an old maid; and when I was a young one, I had, I dare say, more than was good for me. . . . To be unstable and capricious, I really think, is but too characteristic of our sex; and there is, perhaps, no animal so much indebted to subordination for its good behaviour as woman.

Horace Walpole agreed. He replied to Hannah More, on August 21, 1792:

I cannot help venting a little of what haunts me. But it is better to thank Providence for the tranquillity and happiness we have in this Country, in spite of the philosophizing serpents we have in our bosom, the Paines, the Tookes, and the Woolstonecrafts. I am glad you have not read the tract of the last-mentioned writer. I would not look at it, though assured it contains neither metaphysics nor politics; but as she entered the lists in the latter, and borrowed her title from the demon's book, which aimed at spreading the *wrongs* of men, she is excommunicated from the pale of my library. We have had enough of new systems, and the world a great deal too much already. . . .

"THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN"

Mrs. Anne (MacVicar) Grant (1755-1838) wrote to Miss Ourry :

Glasgow, Jan. 2, 1794.

I have seen Mary Woolstonecroft's book, which is so run after here, that there is no keeping it long enough to read it leisurely, though one had leisure. It has produced no other conviction in my mind, but that of the author's possessing considerable abilities, and greatly misapplying them. To refute her arguments would be to write another and a larger book ; . . . Nothing could be more specious and plausible, for nothing can delight Misses more than to tell them they are as wise as their masters. Though, after all, they will in every emergency be like Trinculo in the storm, when he crept under Caliban's gaberdine for shelter. I consider this work as every way dangerous. First, because the author to considerable powers adds feeling, and I daresay a degree of rectitude of intention. She speaks from conviction on her own part, and has completely imposed on herself before she attempts to mislead others. Then because she speaks in such a tone of seeming piety, and quotes Scripture in a manner so applicable and emphatick, that you are thrown off your guard, and surprised into partial acquiescence, before you observe that the deduction to be drawn from her position is in direct contradiction, not only to Scripture, reason, the common sense and custom of the world, but even to parts of her own system, and many of her own assertions.[1]

[1] Letters / from / The Mountain : / Being / The Real Correspondence / of / A Lady, / Between the Years 1773 and 1807. / ' Memory swells / With many a proof of recollected Love.' / Thomson. / In Two Volumes. / Vol. I. [*II.*] / First American / From the third London Edition. / Boston : / Printed by Greenough and Stebbins, / Suffolk-Buildings, Congress-Street. / 1809. (The original London edition first appeared in 1806.)

During the year 1792 appeared the earliest metrical reference to Mary that I have found. It appeared in a volume bearing this title :

Poems. By G. Dyer, B.A., late of Emanuel College, Cambridge. London : Printed for J. Johnson, No. 72 St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1792. (Price Three Shillings.)

Dyer was the whimsical friend of Charles Lamb, and the poem with which we are concerned, together with its accompanying footnotes, is as follows :

ODE VII.

ON LIBERTY.

I.

Hail ! more refulgent than the morning star,
Gay queen of bliss, fair daughter of the sky,
I woo thee, Freedom ! may I hope from far,
To catch the brightness of thy enraptur'd eye ?
While not unseemly streams thy zoneless vest,
Thy wild locks dancing to the frolic wind ;
And, borne on flying feet, thou scorn'st to rest,
Save where meek truth her modest seat may find
Hail, radiant form divine, blest Liberty !
Where'er thou deign'st to rove, oh ! let me rove with thee.

VIII.

Or dost thou, sweet enthusiast ! choose to warm
With more than manly fire the female breast ?
And urge thy Wollstonecraft to break the charm,
Where beauty lies in durance vile opprest ? [2]

[2] Author of the *Rights of Woman.* I have observed, that the most sensible females, when they turn their attention to political subjects, are more uniformly on the side of

Then will I from my Jebb's [3] fair pages prove,
That female minds might teach a patriot throng;
Or 'on the Loire's sweet banks' with Williams [4] rove;
Or hear thee warble in Laetitia's [5] song;
Or see thee weep in Charlotte's [6] melting page;
And from Macaulay [7] learn to scourge a venal age.

liberty than the other sex. This may be accounted for without adopting the sentiments or the language of gallantry. The truth is, that the modes of education and the customs of society are degrading to the female character; and the tyranny of custom is sometimes worse than the tyranny of government. When a sensible woman rises above the tyranny of custom, she feels a generous indignation; which, when turned against the exclusive claims of the other sex, is favourable to female pretensions; when turned against the tyranny of government, it is commonly favourable to the rights of both sexes. Most governments are partial, and more injurious to women than to men.

[3] The widow of the late Dr. Jebb. This lady is known to possess an understanding in political matters exceeded by few. During my writing the above ode, it was my good fortune to read several writings of Mrs. Jebb's, which appeared in the public prints between 1780 and 1785, on Annual Parliaments, the Right of Universale Suffrage, Mr. Fox's India Bill, Ship Money, the Liberties of the Irish Nation, and American Independence. When at Cambridge, this lady published a letter to the author of the Observatrix on the Design of establishing Annual Examinations at Cambridge; and in the opinion of the best judges of the controversy, confuted Dr. Powell and his party. For a reason hinted in a former note, as well as from personal esteem, I bring this tribute of respect to female merit.

[4] Miss Helen Maria Williams, author of *Letters from France*. In the verse above I allude particularly to a poetical epistle of that ingenious lady's from Rouen, in answer to a poetical epistle written to her by Dr. Moore.

[5] Mrs. Laetitia Barbauld.

[6] Mrs. Charlotte Smith, author of *Sonnets*.

[7] Writer of the *History of England*.

According to John Knowles's account, already quoted, Mary, 'on the 8th of December 1792, left London for Paris.' She had contemplated this trip as early as June, for she wrote Everina from London on the 20th of that month:

> I have been considering what you say respecting Eliza's residence in France. For some time past Mr. and Mrs. Fuseli, Mr. Johnson, and myself have talked of a summer excursion to Paris; it is now determined on, and we think of going in about six weeks. I shall be introduced to many people; my book has been translated, and praised in some popular prints, and Mr. Fuseli of course is well known; it is then very probable that I shall hear of some situation for Eliza, and I shall be on the watch. We intend to be absent only six weeks; if then I fix on an eligible situation for her she may avoid the Welsh winter. This journey will not lead me into any extraordinary expense, or I should put it off to a more convenient season, for I am not, as you may suppose, very flush of money, and Charles is wearing out the clothes which were provided for his voyage [to America at her expense]. Still I am glad he has acquired a little practical knowledge of farming.[8]

Charles left for America about the time that Mary finally departed for Paris. She went alone, for the atmosphere at Fuseli's home had grown too cold to permit the party that had been planned. According to Kegan Paul, she 'found a home at first in the house of Madame Filliettaz, *née* Bregantz, in whose school at Putney Mrs. Bishop and Everina Wollstonecraft had both been teachers.'

[8] Kegan Paul, *William Godwin*, i. 206.

Mary wrote to Everina soon after her arrival :

Paris, Dec. 24, '92.

To-morrow I expect to see Aline (Mme. Filliettaz) ; during her absence the servants endeavoured to render the house—a most excellent one—comfortable to me ; but as I wish to acquire the language as fast as I can, I was sorry to be obliged to remain so much alone. I apply so closely to the language, and labour so continually to understand what I hear that I never go to bed without a headache, and my spirits are fatigued with endeavouring to form a just opinion of public affairs. The day after to-morrow I expect to see the king at the bar, and the consequences that will follow I am almost afraid to anticipate.

I have seen very little of Paris—the streets are so dirty, and I wait till I can make myself understood before I call on Madame Laurent, &c. Miss Williams [9] has behaved very civilly to me, and I shall visit her frequently, because I *rather* like her, and I meet French company at her house. Her manners are affected, yet the simple goodness of her heart continually breaks through the varnish, so that one would be more inclined, at least I should, to love than admire her. Authorship is a heavy weight for female shoulders, especially in the sunshine of prosperity. Of the French I will not speak until I know more of them. They seem the people of all others for a stranger to come amongst yet sometimes when I have given a commission which was eagerly asked for, it has not been executed, and when I ask for an explanation, I allude to the servant-maid, a quick girl, who an't please you, has been a teacher in an English boarding-school, dust is thrown up with a self-

[9] Helen Maria Williams (1762-1827).

sufficient air, and I am obliged to appear to see her meaning clearly, though she puzzles herself, that I may not make her feel her ignorance; but you must have experienced the same thing. I will write to you soon again, meantime let me hear from you, and believe me

Yours sincerely and affectionately,

M. W.[1]

Two days later she wrote to Mr. Johnson:

Paris, Dec. 26, 1792.

I should immediately on the receipt of your letter, my dear friend, have thanked you for your punctuality, for it highly gratified me, had I not wished to wait till I could tell you that this day was not stained with blood.[2] Indeed the prudent precautions taken by the National Convention to prevent a tumult, made me suppose that the dogs of faction would not dare to bark, much less to bite, however true to their scent; and I was not mistaken; for the citizens, who were all called out, are returning home with composed countenances, shouldering their arms. About nine o'clock this morning, the king passed by my window, moving silently along (excepting now and then a few strokes on the drum, which rendered the stillness more awful) through empty streets, surrounded by the national guards, who, clustering round their carriage, seemed to deserve their name. The inhabitants flocked to their windows, but the casements were all shut, not a voice was heard, nor did I see any thing like an insulting gesture.—For the first time since I entered France, I bowed

[1] Kegan Paul, *William Godwin*, i. 208, 9.

[2] Wednesday, December 26, was the day on which the King appeared to plead, by his advocate, Deseze. (K. P.'s note.)

to the majesty of the people and respected the propriety of behaviour so perfectly in unison with my own feelings. I can scarcely tell you why, but an association of ideas made the tears flow insensibly from my eyes, when I saw Louis sitting, with more dignity than I expected from his character, in a hackney coach, going to meet death, where so many of his race have triumphed. My fancy instantly brought Louis XIV before me, entering the capital with all his pomp, after one of the victories most flattering to his pride, only to see the sunshine of prosperity overshadowed by the sublime gloom of mystery. I have been alone ever since; and though my mind is calm, I cannot dismiss the lively images that have filled my imagination all the day.—Nay, do not smile, but pity me; for, once or twice, lifting my eyes from the paper, I have seen eyes glare through a glass-door opposite my chair, and bloody hands shook at me. Not the distant sound of a footstep can I hear. My apartments are remote from those of the servants, the only persons who sleep with me in an immense hotel, one door opening after another. —I wish I had kept the cat with me! I want to see something alive; death in so many frightful shapes has taken hold of my fancy.—I am going to bed—and, for the first time in my life, I cannot put out the candle.[3]

In Paris, save for a short stay in Havre, Mary passed her next three not very happy years. Her friends there—some she had already known in London: some she now met for the first time—were of various nationalities. They included Thomas

[3] *Posthumous Works*, Letter XVI. iv. 92-5. Kegan Paul also prints this, I, 209-10, from Godwin's version, but altering the punctuation, and giving the king a capital 'K.'

Christie, founder of *The Analytical Review*; Thomas Cooper of Manchester; Thomas Paine; Helen Maria Williams and her lover John Hurford Stone, whose name she had assumed—all these English; also three Americans: Joel Barlow, his wife Ruth; Gustav, Graf von Schlabrendorf, born in Stettin; a happy pair from Zurich, Jean Gaspard Schweizer and his wife Madeleine; Archibald Hamilton Rowan, an expatriated Irishman; her French intimates Brissot and the Rolands, and—most important of all—Gilbert Imlay.

To this distinguished group must be added, as a business associate of Imlay and probably therefore an acquaintance of Mary—one Elias Backman, of Gothenburg, whom I have purposely omitted from the list above, because Mary always drew a sharp distinction between a 'civil acquaintance' and 'a friend,' and because she was opposed to Imlay's business activities (the alleged cause of his long absence) and, in consequence, to most of his business associates. She once wrote to Imlay: 'I do not admire your commercial face,' and again: 'How I hate this crooked business!'

Practically all of these friends (and others not mentioned by name) were in sympathy with the Revolutionary movement in France; a number had already been made Citizens of France by the National Assembly.[4]

[4] On August 26, 1792, this title was conferred on 'Priestley, Payne,' and on September 25 following the *Patriote* announced the same title conferred on 'Thomas Cooper, John Horne Tooke, Thomas Christie, Englishmen, and Joel Barlow, American.'

Helen Maria Williams had been one of Mary's friends in London; Mary had reviewed several of Helen Maria's books in the *Analytical*, and with obvious pleasure. With Joel Barlow she had consulted regarding the chances of obtaining a farm for Charles in America. And to Paine's house, during his 1791-2 stay in London, she had been a visitor. To this fact Clio Rickman, Paine's friend and biographer, may be our witness.

> Mr. Paine's life in London was a quiet round of philosophical leisure and enjoyment. It was occupied in writing, in a small epistolary correspondence, in walking about with me to visit different friends, occasionally lounging at coffee houses and public places, or being visited by a select few. Lord Edward Fitzgerald; the French and American ambassadors, Mr. Sharp the engraver, Romney the painter, Mrs. Wolstonecraft, Joel Barlow, Mr. Hull, Mr. Christie, Dr. Priestley, Dr. Towers, Colonel Oswald, the walking Stewart, Captain Sampson Perry, Mr. Tuffin, Mr. William Choppin, Captain De Stark, Mr. Horne Tooke, etc., etc., were among the number of his friends and acquaintance. . . .

Of Paine's circle in Paris, two years later, Rickman says:

> In 1793 he retired to the Fauxbourg St. Dennis (*sic*) where he occupied part of the hotel that Madame de Pompadour once resided in.
>
> Here with a chosen few he unbent himself; among whom were Brissot, the Marquis de Chatelet le Roi of the galerie de honore, and an old friend of Dr. Franklin, Bancal, and sometimes General Miranda. His English associates were Christie and family, Mrs. Wolstonecraft, Mr. and Mrs. Stone, etc. Among his American friends were

Capt. Imlay, Joel Barlow, etc., etc., to these parties the French inmates were generally invited.[5]

But of all the friends mentioned, no one—unfortunately for Mary—was so intimate with her as was Captain Gilbert Imlay.

Gilbert Imlay was born in Upper Freehold, Monmouth County, New Jersey, U.S.A., in the year 1754. This direct statement, which the majority of his biographers avoid, shall have such evidential support as I can give it.

I believe that he was descended, in the fifth generation from a Peter Imlay, who bought land from Thomas Boll in 1693. This same land was sold in the year 1710 by a Patrick Imlay, and it seems a fair assumption that Patrick was the son of Peter. A later Patrick became one of the founders of the Presbyterian Church 'Old Scots' in Freehold. He was a grantee of the Matawan tract, and acquired land on Doctor's Creek, Allentown. Imlaystown, on Doctor's Creek, in the county of Monmouth, was named for this honourable family. Patrick died and left issue: Robert, William and Parthenia, of whom Robert was the grandfather of the philandering Gilbert. This Robert died in 1754, and in his will he left property to his wife Alice; and to his children, Peter, John, William, Elizabeth and Margaret.

[5] *The Life of Thomas Paine* .... By Thomas Clio Rickman. . . . London: Printed and Published by Thomas Clio Rickman, Upper Mary-le-Bone Street; and to be had of all Booksellers. 1819.

The will of Robert's wife, signed 'Allys Imlay' (dated June 7, 1761) makes her son Peter sole heir, with a small legacy to her son John, and to Peter's children, who are mentioned in this order: Robert, Peggey and Gilbert. Robert, apparently the eldest, was not yet ten, for 'the money is to be put out at intrest when the said Child is Ten years old.' It is not very likely that thrifty Allys would have wished this money to remain without 'intrest' for any length of time, so I think we may assume that Robert was at least nine. This dates his birth in 1752, and, considering how rapidly colonial families increased, one may venture to assign 'Peggey's' birth to 1753, and Gilbert's, the youngest, to 1754.

In due course he joined the Revolutionary Army, but of his service there few records remain.

Heitman's *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army* (like the same author's other work—see above, p. 203—unofficial but entitled to credit) shows: 'Imlay, Gilbert (New Jersey) 1st Lieutenant &c. 11th January 1777; resigned 24th July 1778,' and personal information from the Adjutant General of New Jersey and from the U.S. Adjutant General confirms these particulars.

On the title-page of his book—*A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America* (see below, p. 231), Imlay describes himself as having been 'A Captain in the American Army during the late War.' Whether this rank was an official one or the title given him by courtesy, I do not know.

After the war Imlay settled in Kentucky. Professor

Rusk, in his pamphlet *The Adventures of Gilbert Imlay*,[6] thus describes his appearance there :

> At the close of the Revolutionary War, Imlay, like many other land-hungry ex-officers of the American army, turned toward the Western country, where white settlers, who had first penetrated the region only a few years before, were not appearing in considerable numbers. In March 1783 Imlay purchased a tract of land in Fayette, one of the three counties into which the District of Kentucky was at that time divided ; (It was still a part of Virginia.) and in the autumn of that year he attempted through the agency of Henry Green, deputy surveyor of that county, to obtain a clear title. It does not seem likely, however, that Imlay himself appeared in Kentucky before the spring of the following year, 1784. According to his own account, in which he does not state the year, he left Pittsburgh on his Western journey sometime in March and arrived at Limestone less than five days later.[7] That the year was 1784 and that his own statement as to the month is correct seems likely, because at that time, and not until then, begins the long court record of the business and legal entanglements that marks his residence of not quite two years in Kentucky.
>
> On the seventh of the following April, Imlay, who, as we have seen, had already begun speculation in Kentucky lands, took the oath at Louisville as a deputy surveyor of Jefferson County by the faculty of William and Mary College, November 27, 1780. . . . . This office, to which Imlay vaguely alludes on the title-page of *A Topographical Description*, where he claims for himself the dignity of ' com-

[6] *Indiana University Studies*, vol. x. No. 57, March 1923.

[7] *A Topographical Description*, 1792, p. 40.

missioner for laying out land in the back settlements,' was doubtless of considerable advantage to him as a speculator. How long he retained the desirable place, however, I have been unable to determine. At all events, he was not long to remain free from the annoyance of sheriffs' summonses, which from this time on were continually dinned in his ears while he remained in Kentucky, and posted at church doors and published in newspapers years after his departure.

Imlay gradually became the owner of thousands upon thousands of acres in Kentucky lands—of all of which he was dispossessed, for one reason after another, before the end of 1786.

During the two years Imlay remained in Kentucky he wrote four letters to his friend and business associate, Henry Lee (not 'Light Horse Harry'). The originals of these letters are in the Draper MSS. of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. A few extracts will be given here:

(1) As its probable that I shall leave this Country sometime in October for the East I shall take it as a favor if you will undertake the surveying of the Land I purchased of Capt. Holder. . . . In case I should go Eastward Dr. Skinner will pay the bills you draw on me. Farewell, Success attend you.

G. IMLAY.

Lincoln, 14th Sept. 1784.

(2) Puting the highest confidence in your abilities and diligence I shall Rest assured that a completion of the Whole Business will be made. Farewell. God bless you. On Wednesday morning I launch into the wilderness. Expect to see me by Christmas.

G. IMLAY.

Danville, 10 Oct. 1784.

(3) The last letter may refer to an early philandering, or to a negro slave wench—the latter more likely, I think.

Dear Sir,

Genl Wilkinson has undertaken my business in Fayette and will make provision for the expenses of surveying. I have been obliged to part with the girl that Mr. Brent brought down. If she has been lodged with you be so good as to send her to Mr. Joel Collins's in Lexington. I have got Mr. Lees survey of 4,000 acres received with some difficulty. The fees &c. was £2: 15: 7½. Pray let me hear from you before your departure.

Yours &c.

G. Imlay.

May 28th, 1785. Danville.

From a letter written by this General Wilkinson in the previous year it appears that even in 1784 Imlay's financial condition was not of the best.

Sept. 28 [1784].

Your affairs with Mr. Imlay remain in the same situation they did when I last wrote you—however I expect on my return that Mr. Imlay must have procured unequivocal titles sufficient to take up his Bonds—if he has, the Business will be immediately closed, otherwise it will remain in its present situation—for were I to push or expose Imlay in his present critical situation, ruin would come upon him, and you would lose your property, probably forever. Depend, Sir, on my fidelity and attention and be assured I am your obliged and obedient servant. James Wilkinson.

Mathew Irvine, Esq.[8]

[8] Original in the Emmett MSS. Collection, New York Public Library.

Professor Rusk dates Imlay's return from his journey to 'the East' before April 9, 1785. He was in Danville in May, and probably remained for some time, for a record exists of his entering into an agreement there in November with Isaac Hite and Amos Ogden to erect iron works. In December he was probably at Richmond. Professor Rusk continues:

> On the third of December he made a small payment to Colonel John Campbell on account of his debt to Rogers. The record of this transaction seems to be the last substantial evidence of Imlay's presence in the United States. And according to testimony offered in the Kentucky courts during the following year—testimony which, for a number of reasons, may be accepted as convincing—Imlay left the continent of America before the end of 1786.

There is a considerable gap between December 1786 and 1792, the date of publication of Imlay's first book.[9] His whereabouts during those five years

[9] *A / Topographical Description / of the / Western Territory / of / North America*; / Containing / A succinct Account / of its / Climate, Natural History, Population, Agriculture, Manners and Customs, / With / An ample Description of the several Divisions into / which that Country is partitioned, / And an accurate Statement of the various Tribes of Indians / that inhabit the Frontier Country. / To which is annexed, / A Delineation of the Laws and Government of the State of Kentucky. / Tending to shew the probable Rise and Grandeur of the American Empire. / In a Series of Letters to a Friend in England. / (printer's line) / By G. Imlay, / A Captain in the American Army during the late War, and a Commissioner for laying out Land in the Back Settlements. / (printer's line) / London: / Printed for J. Debrett, Opposite Burlington-House, / Piccadilly. / (printer's line) / 1792.

must be a matter of mere conjecture. I think it likely that he sailed for France with the idea of persuading the French to attempt the conquest of New Orleans from Spain. There may well have been some recollections in Imlay's mind of his own travels when he wrote the account of a European journey of 'Mr. Il—ray,' the hero of his only work of fiction, *The Emigrants*. (See below, p. 237.)

The time of Imlay's arrival in London is also a matter of conjecture, but as his *Topographical Description* was mentioned as being published during the first six months of 1792 in *The Analytical Review* (Appendix to Vol. XIII., August 1792, p. 533), I think it likely that he was in London during perhaps the whole of 1791, preparing his MS. for press and revising proofs when the printing had started. The complete MS. could not have been ready for press until a very few months before publicatiom, for, as Professor Rusk points out, 'the author devotes a part of the eleventh chapter to comment upon St. Clair's defeat of November 4, 1791.'

Imlay's book was received with unanimous approval by the reviewers. The subject of settlement in America was then of great general interest, and Imlay had chosen an excellent time for his book to appear. Its popularity is sufficiently shown by the fact that it went through three London editions—all published by Debrett—a second edition in 1793, and a third, greatly enlarged, in 1797. A New York edition was published in 1793.

Imlay went to Paris, probably about February 1793, bearing a letter of introduction to Brissot from Thomas

Cooper, of Manchester, who with Watt, the son of the inventor of the steam-engine, had been in Paris the previous year, and, as Professor Rusk says, the two 'got out of Paris, in haste and secretly, in time to save their heads.'

Imlay found in Brissot a man already interested in the scheme for the seizure by France of New Orleans and the lower Mississippi valley. Ever since the Frenchman had travelled in the eastern part of America in 1788 and written a book about it,[1] he had been keeping himself informed on affairs there. Brissot had been influential in securing the appointment of Le Brun to the Foreign Office and Genet to the United States. He was interested in the commercial possibilities of the Mississippi valley, and as early as 1791 had reported the hostile feeling of the western Americans against Spain. On January 25, 1793, he was designated by the Comiteé de Défense Generale (later succeeded by the Comite de Salut Public) to present a report on the possibility of an expedition against the Spanish dependencies.

[1] Nouveau Voyage / dans / les ETATS-UNIS / De / L'Amerique Septentrionale, / Fut en 1788; Par J. P. Brissot (Warville), / Citoyen Francois (*sic*) / (Quotation, Latin and French) / (Printer's line) A Paris, / chez Bursam, Imprimeur et Libraire, rue / Haute-Feuille, No. 20. / (short double line) / Avril 1791.

This volume was translated into English by Joel Barlow and published in America:

New Travels / in the / United States / of / America. / (double printer's line) / Performed in 1788. / By J. P. Brissot de Warville. / (Printer's line) / Translated from the French / (double lines) / (Quotation from Tacitus) / (double lines repeated) / New York: / Printed by T. & S. Swords, for Berry & Rogers, Book- / sellers and Stationers, No. 35, Hanover-Square. / —1792.—

Brissot gave Imlay a letter of introduction to some 'citoyen' unknown.

CITOYEN,

Je vous addresse le Capitaine Imlay, americain de l'etat de Kentucky, qui m'a été recommendé par l'estimable Cooper de Manchester, il desiroit s'entretenir avec moi de l'expedition du Mississippi. Il me paroit très propre a vous donner les renseignements sur le manière de mettre ce plan à execution. Lorsque vous l'aurez entretenu, nous fixerons un jour avec le Ministre pour avoir une Conference generale sur cet objet.

Croyez moi tout à vous,

J. P. BRISSOT.[2]

le 26 Mars 1793.

The following month Brissot sent him to the Minister of Foreign Affairs—Le Brun.

Paris ce 22 Avril 1793.

CITOYEN MINISTRE,

Le Capitaine Imlay qui vous remettre cette lettre m'aprend qu'il n'y a encore rien d'arreté pour l'expedition du Mississipi. Je vous avoue que cette lenteur me parait très prejudiciable pour la chose publique. Si ce Capitaine et les autres personnes ne partent pas sous 15 jours, il foudra renoncer a l'enterprise, et certes La Republique aurait des reproches très fondés à faire pour y avoir renoncé, hatez vous donc de prendre un parti decisiv. L'argent ne doit pas vous arreter maintenant. Avez vous besoin de l'avis du Conseil je suis pret a y aller, pour y developer les avantages du plan mais de grace ne perdez pas un moment.

J. P. BRISSOT.[3]

[2] *Archives des Affaires Etrangeres, Espagne*, vol. 635, fo. 295.

[3] *Ibid.* 'Corresp. Polit.' vol. 636, fo. 105.

Imlay met with no success whatever in his negotiations with the French government. His first proposal is brief and vague. He gives five inconclusive reasons why France should undertake this expedition: first, It would alarm Spain, force her to 'augment her forces in America,' and so 'result in an additional embarrassment of her finances'; second, French commerce would enjoy immense advantage 'by the abundance of goods of all sorts that the Ohio and the Mississippi would furnish as soon as their chains were broken'; third, 'It would be easy to arm Corsairs (privateers) at New Orleans'; fourth, 'It may eventually draw' the United States 'into actual war'; and fifth, 'This plan can be executed at very little expense.'

The proposal merited no response, and received none. In his second, much longer, proposal, he remarks: he 'fears that the papers presented on this subject to your Committee by Ministre Le Brun have not yet been examined.'

For a summary of this second proposal I take advantage of Professor Rusk's version:

> Imlay presents a carefully prepared argument, tactfully interspersed with professions of deep respect for the Revolution and for the Committee of Public Safety. The author urges enthusiastically the importance which Spain attached to Louisiana, the long attempt of the Spaniards to use their position in that province to extend their power over the Western territories of the United States, the rapid growth and future commercial importance of those territories, his own first-hand knowledge of the Western people gained during a long residence

in that country, the necessity of keeping the matter from the knowledge of the American government, the slight expense the expedition would involve and the possibility, if it should prove necessary to exercise extreme retrenchment, of avoiding even that small expense by putting the whole matter into the hands of Genet (then French minister to the United States) and the men of the Western country.

Imlay made an estimate of the probable cost of this expedition :

> If your Committee sees the evident importance of this plan, Captain Imlay is sure that the slight expense that will be necessary, which will not exceed seven hundred and fifty thousand livres . . . will not be a reason for abandoning it. . . . With this sum success is certain.

It is fairly evident, from the second letter from Brissot, quoted above, that Imlay himself was to take an active part in this expedition, and perhaps be its leader.

Professor Rusk says :

> In all probability . . . Imlay and 'the others' never actually started on their mission. Certainly the fifteen days within which Brissot considered it necessary to act or abandon the plan passed without a decision ; for exactly a month later we find a certain Lyonnet, who may have been one of 'the others' who were to go with Imlay, writing from Lyons to Otto of the Foreign Office that he has received a letter from Imlay informing him that though nothing has been done, hope for the Missisippi scheme has not been entirely abandoned. But such hope could not have lasted much longer, for the fall of the Brissotins was impending . . . at the end of the following October Brissot himself

was sent to the guillotine. As for the preparations making on the other side of the Atlantic in connection with the projected conquest of Louisiana, they were ended shortly after Fauchet relieved Genet as ambassador in the following February. Though there was some talk in 1795 of reviving the project, there seems to be no proof that Imlay was again involved.

The allusions in Mary's letters and in Godwin's *Memoirs*, to a cherished plan of settling on a farm in America are not, perhaps, without added significance when viewed in the light of the fact that during the early period of their acquaintance the way seemed open to success for Imlay through the Louisiana expedition. A plantation in the West would have been only a reasonable reward, and Brissot himself, we are told by Madame Roland, had at one time looked forward to the same kind of retreat in America. On the other hand, the failure of the Louisiana scheme may have had some bearing on Imlay's decision to engage in business, which . . . was not put into effect until the autumn of 1793, when the Brissotins had been driven from power. At first, when Imlay began his business operations, his object, if we may believe Mary's letter, was to gain a thousand pounds, which would have been 'sufficient to have procured a farm in America.'

It was in May or June 1793—a month or two after Imlay and Mary had, in Godwin's words, 'entered into that species of connection, for which her heart secretly panted'—that Imlay's novel *The Emigrants*, etc., was published in London in three small volumes. Another edition in one volume, probably pirated, was brought out in Dublin in 1794.[4]

[4] The / Emigrants, &c. / or the / History / of / An Expatriated Family, / Being / A Delineation of English

This is the first Kentucky novel. It is written in the form of letters, and the underlying purpose seems to be to condemn the existing divorce laws in England. Two of the female characters exemplify, in their own lives, the difficulty of obtaining a divorce; the book contains various dissertations on the subject in letters from other persons; and the author in his Preface says:

> I have no doubt but the many misfortunes which daily happen in domestic life, and which too often precipitate women of the most virtuous inclinations into the gulf of ruin, proceed from the great difficulty there is in England, of obtaining a divorce.

Manners, / Drawn from Real Characters, / Written in America, / By G. Imlay, Esq. / Author of *The Topographical Description of its Western Territory.* / Vol. I. [*II. III.*] / London. / Printed for A. Hamilton, near Gray's-Inn-Gate, / Holborn. / 1793. 3 vols. 12mo. Vol. I. pp. xiv. 1-221; Vol. II. ii plus 222 (actually 224, pp. 71/2 being repeated; Vol. III. ii + 192. The volumes end respectively with Letters XXIV, XLIX and LXXII. There are actually 74 letters, numbers LXIX and LXX being repeated.

The one-volume edition had the same title. The imprint reads: Dublin. Printed for C. Brown, No. 93, Grafton-Street. 1794. 1 Vol. 12mo. pp. vii, 325, Letters I-LXXIV.

The book is extremely scarce in either edition. I have discovered only four copies of the first edition: one in the British Museum, lacking both second and third volumes; one in the John Carter Brown Library of Brown University, Providence; one in the New York Public Library, bought at the sale of the library of Charles Deane, a Boston collector; and one picked up in England by the late Col. R. T. Durett of Louisville (founder of the Filson Club), and by him bequeathed to the University of Chicago. Of the 1794 Dublin edition, after a casual search, I have learned of only four copies: one in the library of the Peabody Institute, Baltimore, presented in 1919 by the Maryland Historical Society (an acquisition of theirs of 1856 from the Baltimore Library Company); a copy sold in 1898 at Bangs' Auction Room, New York; my own copy, generously presented to me by Mr. John Wilson Townsend, and one recently offered at £5, 'Very Scarce' by Quaritch.

Imlay puts into the mouths of his characters many quotations from such authors as Tasso, Cardinal de Retz, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Frederick the Great, Rochefoucauld (all quoted in English), Shakespear (*sic*), Milton, Thomson and Sterne. An imitation of the latter is occasionally noticeable. Many of the letter-writers employ scraps of verse to express their sentiments. About half of these cite the author, Thomson being the favourite. The remaining verses are printed without quotation marks, and we may probably assume that they were inspired by Imlay's own Muse.

The book is written in all seriousness, and without a spark of humour ; but the language is so delightfully florid, and the characters continually display so much of that quality, now obsolete, then termed 'sensibility,' that much of the novel may still be read with amusement.

The tale begins with the arrival at Philadelphia of a family from England, in September 1782. (The letters are not dated by years, merely by months and days, but the year 1782 is sufficiently fixed by the fact that the hero of the book is later described as having been 'in his sixteenth year when the late unhappy war commenced' and 'he appears now to be about two and twenty.')

The family consist of Mr. and Mrs. T——n, their son George, and their three daughters, Eliza, Mary, and the lovely Caroline. Mr. T——n was a man whose business 'was at one time worth ten thousand pounds annually,' but the extravagance of his wife and the dissipation of his son had ruined him, and forced him to flee from his creditors to America.

I shall give only two extracts from this book. The first is a passage describing the departure of the T——n family from Philadelphia on their journey to Pittsburgh—then Fort Pitt. It is typical of Imlay's florid style, and the last paragraph was quoted verbatim, in ridicule, by one of his English reviewers :

> This dejected family was preparing to traverse a region which they had been taught to believe was inhabited mostly by wild beasts and savages ; unattended, except by the driver of the waggon, they had hired for the purpose of transporting the small hoards they had preserved from the wreck of that opulence they once so prodigally squandered.
>
> The lovely Caroline's face diffused the soft effulgence of an opening rose when heaven impearls it with the morning dew :—and as you have seen the aether of a western sky brighten the horizon in the evening showers of June, so shot the aethereal sparks from her half-closed eyes.—With her heart beating high in the transports of nature her lovely bosom seemed to palpitate with emotions which threatened the confines of her delicate frame ; and when she was severed from the arms of her more fortunate sister [Eliza, who had married Mr. F——, ' a passenger in the ship which conveyed them across the Atlantic ' and was to return to London with him], it appeared as if the fibres of her tender heart would burst with the agonies of sorrow.
>
> Every spectator caught the flame of sympathy, and in that querulous moment, we appeared like the mourners of Adonis surrounding the Queen of Love.—The hasty hours upon the rapid wings of Time hurried on the moment of their departure.—Language then was mute.—As when a shipwrecked crew, who are entombed in the boisterous waves,

and whose murmurs cease, and you no longer hear aught but the scolding winds;—as such was that *luctiferous* schism.

The other extract is the description of the lovely Caroline, as she, and her lover Captain Arl—ton, who has just rescued her from the Indians, travel down the river on their return to Louisville.

This sad event is first announced in a letter from P. P——, Esq., to Mr. Il—ray, 'Clarkville, Tuesday, August' [1783]:

> I am made the most miserable man alive, my dear sir, in the loss of my charming and most affectionate niece Caroline.
>
> She was carried off this morning by a party of Indians from the heights of Silver Creek. . . .

Captain Arl—ton, however, writes to Mr. Il—ray from Kaskaskia in September [1783]:

> Caroline has fallen into my hands!—she is at this moment decorating the gardens of this place while I am writing to you, and seems to give enchantment to the whispering breezes that are wafted to my window, and which in their direction, as they pass her, collect from her sweets the fragrance of ambrosia, and the exhilarating charms of love itself. . . . The weather was very fine, and as my rafts were well constructed, I ordered them to be brought alongside each other, and lash together; in order to render us more compact in case we should be followed: which was not very likely, as it would take them too long to prepare a raft, and it was impossible for them to procure a canoe—but it was not unlikely they would cross and follow down upon the opposite shore . . . for that reason I determined to float the whole night . . . accord-

ingly I had a canopy stretched in such a manner as to secure Caroline a place to sleep, who I knew must be much fatigued from our rapid movements, independent of the perils and hardships she must have undergone during her captivity.

Indeed I wondered that she was alive—but she was not only alive, my friend ! but she looked more lovely than ever—the lustre of her eyes was like the torch of love—her smiles like the genial hours of May when nature blooms in all its eradiated charms ; and though her beateous face had been lacerated with brambles, still the little loves seemed to vie with each other, as if to prove, which of her features the most fascinating.

The sun had declined below the horizon, and the bird of Minerva had resumed its nightly vigils, when Andrew told Caroline, that a pallet was prepared for her under the canopy, and that she must retire to rest ; for, said he, my good mistress, master would keep you up half the night, and I am sure you cannot have spirits or strength to support fatigue. Andrew was in the right.

When Venus lies sleeping on the couch of night, and one half of the world is cheered by the brilliancy of her charms, so looked my Caroline when Somnus had sealed up eyelides, and while Morpheus, his minister of dreams, was agitating her tender heart, her bosom disclosed the temple of bliss, while her lips distilled nectareous sweets.

I was already distracted by the potency of the bewitching joys which I had snatched in my embrace upon the river bank ; and while I was constrained to watch as she slept, it was impossible for me to withstand the reflection of the taper, that Andrew had lighted, and which cast its rays upon a bosom more transparent than the effulgence of Aurora, when robed in all her charms, and more lovely than a poetical imagination can paint, when influenced

by all its enthusiasm ;—and which was now half naked. I was obliged to extinguish the light, to preserve my reason.

> Oh ! how I could for ever her adore,
> By tasting sweets new beauties to explore,
> The to entangle in her lovely arms,
> And drown ev'ry sense in unrivall'd charms ?

I have found only two reviews of this book. *The British Critic*, July 1793 (1 : 341), abruptly dismissed it in a most sarcastic manner ; the *Monthly Review*, August 1793 (11 : 468, 9), took quite the opposite view, and gave it two pages.

It remains to relate briefly the exact nature of Imlay's ' business '—a matter which has puzzled his commentators ever since 1879, when Kegan Paul ventured that his ' trade was presumably in lumber.' Both Dr. Garnett in *D.N.B.* account of Imlay, and Roger Ingpen in his edition of *Letters* have repeated this assumption. Another worker on Imlay, Professor Rusk, gives a contrary opinion. ' Of Imlay's activities in the lumber business in America,' he says, ' I have found no trace.'

What is the truth? Mary herself, in one of her letters, gave a clue. The letter was written to Imlay from Paris, September 22, 1794, and contains this sentence :

> Well, this you will say is trifling—shall we talk about alum and soap ?

The solution of the mystery was revealed in the account of Elias Backman (1760-1829) that I obtained from Stockholm. Backman, who was in Paris during 1792-3, became associated there with Imlay, and on his return to Gothenburg acted as Imlay's agent, and

is so termed in the power of attorney with which Imlay sent Mary to Scandinavia in an endeavour to straighten out his tangled affairs there.

> Elias Backman was engaged in large export and import transactions in Gothenburg. He exported to England, France and Spain. His business included grain, steel, iron, wooden goods, alum, pitch, etc., etc. According to available records in the Swedish state archives he received between 1790 and 1800 royal permission to import silver and gold to the country for the purpose of strengthening the Swedish finances. He . . . also exported cannon and gunpowder from the Swedish government supplies, but whether there were shipped to France or to the United States, is not known. With the latter country he had many business transactions.
>
> Elias Backman was in 1797 appointed American consul for Gothenburg, and ' such districts as were nearer Gothenburg than any other city with an American Consul.' He was probably the first American Consul in Sweden. His appointment was signed by General Washington, and is now in the possession of his family.

The problem of Imlay's business is therefore solved.

What finally became of Imlay ? On this point I can only quote Richard Garnett, who sent the following to the *Athenaeum* (No. 3955) of August 15, 1903 (p. 219) :

> GILBERT IMLAY.
>
> Hampstead, July 1903.
>
> I AM not aware whether any facts have been ascertained respecting the end of Gilbert Imlay, the false lover of Mary Wollstonecraft, who,
>
> Like the base Indian threw a pearl away
> Richer than all his tribe.

When I wrote the article upon him for the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the latest reference to him I could find was Godwin's account of his meeting with Mary in April, 1796. (See *Memoirs*.)

I have, however, recently become possessed of a copy, made in 1833, of a curious epitaph in prose and verse upon a Gilbert Imlay, which then existed in the churchyard of St. Brelade's, Jersey. The prose part is as follows :

> 'Here was (*sic*) intered (*sic*) the perishable remains of Gilbert Imlay, Esq., who was born Feb. 9, 1758 and expired on the 20 Novr., 1828.'

I am informed by the incumbent that the age of the deceased as stated in the parish register would correspond not with 1758 as the year of birth, but with 1754. This would agree better with the probable date of Imlay's birth, which in my memoir, from some slight indications furnished by himself, I conjectured to have been 1755. On the whole, considering the close parallel of time, the juxtaposition of two unusual names as Gilbert and Imlay, the latter hardly met with elsewhere, and the hint in the metrical part that the subject had affected the character of a philosopher, I am much disposed to think that the grave in St. Brelade's Churchyard really does or did contain the remains of Mary Wollstonecraft's faithless lover. The point might, perhaps, be absolutely determined if a will or letters of administration could be found.

I have not been able to ascertain whether the epitaph still exists in the churchyard. On this account, and from the light it contributes to the identity of the person it commemorates, it might be worth while to reproduce it, even if its special

demerit did not entitle it to a place among remarkable epitaphs :

Stranger intelligent ! should you pass this way
Speak of the social advances of the day—
Mention the greatly good, who've serenely shone
Since the soul departed its mortal bourne ;
Say if statesmen wise have grown, and priests sincere
Or if hypocrisy must disappear
As phylosophy extends the beam of truth,
Sustains rights divine, its essence, and the worth
Sympathy may permeate the mouldering earth,
Recal the spirit, and remove the dearth,
Transient hope gleams even in the grave,
Which is enough dust can have, or ought to crave.
Then silently bid farewell, be happy,
For as the globe moves round, thou will grow nappy.
Wake to hail the hour when new scenes arise,
As brightening vistas open in the skies.

And now for Mary's less intimate (and less disastrous) friends. Jean Caspard Schweizer (1754-1811) and his wife Madeleine (*née* Hess) (1751-1814) [5] were a pleasant Swiss couple. According to Schweizer's biographer, Mary was one of the distinguished friends whom they entertained in Paris at their luxurious home in the ' Rue Taitbout, Chaussée d'Antin,' a company reported to have been made up of personages such as Bernardin de St. Pierre

[5] See also : Joh. Caspar Schweizer / Ein Charakterbild aus dem Zeitalter der / französischer Revolution / von / David Hess / Eingeleitet und herausgegeben / von / Jakon Baechtold / Roscher & Cie., Verlag, Zurich. 1919. (An exact reprint from the first edition, Jena, 1881.)

(author of *Paul and Virginia*), General Dumouriez, Lafayette, Anacharsis Cloots, Count von Schlabrendorf, George Forster, Mirabeau and the Prince of Conti. Mary mentions Madeleine in a couple of letters, and each of the Schweizers have made interesting reference to Mary.

Madeleine kept a journal, and during 1794 described an evening she passed with Mary in the country :

> I was very fond of Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of *Rights of Woman*, and should have liked to regard her with constant affection, but she was so intolerant that she repulsed those women who were not inclined to be subservient to her ; whilst to her servants, her inferiors, and the wretched in general, she was gentle as an angel. Were it not for her excessive sensibility, which too often gains the upper hand, her personality would be exquisite. I passed one evening with her in the country. The blending of the varying tints of colour in the sky were of a marvellous poetical beauty. Mary was sitting with the B(aron) de W(olzogen ?) beneath a tree gilded by the rays of the setting sun. I was opposite them, and was so enraptured by the scene that I said to you : 'Come, Mary,—come, nature lover,—and enjoy this wonderful spectacle—this constant transition from colour to colour!' But, to my great surprise, Mary was so indifferent that she never turned her eyes from him by whom she was at the moment captivated. I must confess that this erotic absorption made such a disagreeable impression on me, that all my pleasure vanished.

The reference made by Schweizer himself may be dated during the four weeks in 1801 that he remained in London on his way to Paris. He called at the studio of his old friend and fellow townsman Fuseli.

He knocked at the door: but Fuseli, for some unknown reason, refused him admittance. Schweizer sent him these lines:

> Und wär dein grosser Pinsel auch, O Füessli,
> Der ausgeriss'nen Fichten Rolande eine,
> Tröff von der glühenden Palette dir
> Des Aetnas Lava selbst auf's Tuch herab:
> All eins! Wenn dir auch nicht das schöne Kolorit
> Der Seelenwärme auf dein Antlitz quillt,
> Wenn alte Freundschaft an dein Hausthor klopft,
> So fahre wohl! Ich meld es zum Elysium
> Wollstonecraft und Lavatern, es sei
> Has härt'ste Erz zu deinem Bild—dein Herz!

Gustav, Graf von Schlabrendorf (1750-1824) has been called an 'odd philanthropist.' The only accounts of his life which I have been able to find are those in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, and Michaud's *Biographie Universelle*. Michaud gives his full name as 'Christophe George Gustave, comte de Schlaberndorf,' and also says he 'naquit a Breslau en 1749.' The last name is of course wrongly spelt, and I am inclined to think the date and place of birth are also incorrect. The German authority gives this account:

> Born 22 March 1750 at Stettin, Germany, 3rd son of Ernest William von S., who was afterwards prime minister of Silesia, and whose descendants rankes as counts by favour of the king. At Breslau, whither his father removed in 1755, he received a thorough private education which enabled him to enter the High School, Frankfort on the Oder, 1767-9, and at Halle on the Saale, 1769-72. He was entered as a student of law in preparation for govern-

ment service, studied different sciences, ancient languages, philosophy and public law. His father died, 1769, leaving him a fortune, which, with the income already received from a Chapter in the Cathedral of Magdeburg, gave him ample means to travel.

He set out at once, and travelled through Germany, Switzerland, France and England. England interested him by its originality, its constitution, its developed industries and philanthropic institutions. He made the acquaintance of prominent men, accompanied Freiherr von Stein and von Reden on their travels for the study of mines and the smelting industry; became also the friend of Friederich Heinrich Jacobi, the philosopher. At this period his originality was first displayed in peculiar acts of philanthropy. Once he stayed in the prison cell of a young man convicted of robbery and sentenced to death, and walked by his side to the gallows, consoling him.

Shortly before the French revolution he removed to Paris, enthusiastically following the phases of the people's uprising. There he came in contact with other Germans, L. E. Oelsner, George Kerner (brother of Justinus) and George Forster.

After the downfall of the Girondists he was arrested and imprisoned towards the end of 1793, which event dissolved his engagement for marrying Miss Christie, a lady from Scotland.[6]

[6] I am sure this was a sister of Mary's friend Thomas Christie, who has often been mentioned in *Memoirs* as being in Paris at that time. M. André Maurois tells us in *Ariel* that Shelley gave Mary a copy of *Queen Mab*, a poem which had been dedicated to his first wife, and that under the dedication Shelley wrote: 'Count Slobendorf was about to marry a woman who, attracted solely by his fortune, proved her selfishness by deserting him in prison.' It was not, therefore, Schlabrendorf's imprisonment which 'dissolved his engagement,' but the selfishness of this Miss Christie.

It was probably soon after Schlabrendorf's confinement in January that Mary began to visit him and bring him comfort. I am sure she went as often as she was allowed, for nothing pleased her more than giving aid to the wretched and unfortunate. Schlabrendorf himself records her kindness to him and his gradually increasing affection for her.

My first knowledge of the relations between Mary and Von Schlabrendorf—apart from the brief mention Godwin makes in *Memoirs*—was from Emma Rauschenbusch-Clough's well written book on Mary Wollstonecraft.[7]

In this book one may read :

> Count Schlabrendorf had an intimate friend, Carl Gustav Jochmann, with whom he conversed about many notable events and persons, and who thought these conversations of sufficient value to take notes of them. As a mark of special confidence, evidently, Schlabrendorf told him of his acquaintance with Mary Wollstonecraft.

Having traced Jochmann's own narrative of his friend's confidences,[8] I found therein an article headed : 'MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT.' Here is given a sketch of her life (condensed from *Memoirs*), together

[7] A Study / of / Mary Wollstonecraft / and / The Rights of Woman / By / Emma Rauschenbusch-Clough. / Longmans, Green, and Co. / 39 Paternoster Row, London / New York and Bombay / 1895.

[8] Carl Gustav Jochmann's / von Pernau, / Reliquien. / Aus seinen nachgelassenen Papieren. / Gesammelt / von Heinrich Zschokke. / (printer's ornament) / Erster Band. / (double lines across page) / Hechingen. / Verlag von Georg Egersdorff. (1836.)

with the notes that Schlabrendorf inscribed in his copy of *Memoirs*.

Jochmann says :

> My honoured friend (Schlabrendorf) gave to me William Godwin's Memoirs of the Author, etc. (2nd edition, London, 1798), in which he had underlined many passages and added marginal notes, some of which I have included in the above sketch. He evidently showed the book to but a few of his best friends. Humboldt had it for a time. 'Perhaps you will occasionally smile,' said the Count, as he handed it to me. But how mistaken he was! I was deeply touched by it.

The notes are as follow :

> The author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman wrote as she believed, loved and lived. Therefore she became unhappy, therefore was she scorned by her own sex. . . .
>
> And yet, Mary was the noblest, purest and most intelligent woman I have ever met. I knew her well, even before the time of my imprisonment, during the reign of terror. Mary was, without being a dazzling beauty, yet of a charming grace. Her face, so full of expression, presented a style of beauty beyond that of merely regular features. There was enchantment in her glance, her voice, and her movement. While in prison she often visited me ; she enthralled me more and more. Not until after she had left Paris, did I realize that I loved her. Her unhappy union with Imlay prevented any closer bond with her.

Speaking of the time at which Mary took Imlay's name, (August 1793), Schlabrendorf wrote :

> At that time she visited me and comforted me in prison. Imlay did not appreciate her worth and

became indifferent. At Havre she gave birth to a daughter. He in the meantime went to England and became attached to an actress. She brought up her child according to her principles, simply, naturally, not spoiling her. The women of Havre called her the 'raven mother.' When I asked her what the women of that place had said to her, she replied: 'They all thought I was not worthy of having such a child.'

Of Archibald Hamilton Rowan, who spent nearly a year in Paris when Mary was there, there is a good account in the *D.N.B.* But the relations between Mary and himself are narrated in his *Autobiography*.[9]

Rowan, born in 1751 and a United Irishman, was the only son and heir of Gawin Hamilton, of Killyleagh Castle, co. Down; he took his grandfather's name as one of the conditions of the will, by which he inherited considerable wealth. In 1781, in Paris, he married Sarah Ann Dawson, daughter of Walter Dawson, of Lisawsk, near Carrickmacross, co. Monaghan. They resided in Paris until 1784, when, at the request of his mother, Rowan and his wife returned to Ireland. He soon became active in politics, and in 1791 was brought up for trial in the king's bench on a charge of distributing a seditious pamphlet. The charge was unfounded, for Rowan had neither written the pamphlet, nor disseminated it. Curran defended him in what is called his ablest speech, but Rowan was convicted, and sentenced to a fine and two years' imprisonment. Soon after his confinement in the Dublin Newgate, with the aid of friends, and a convenient vessel, he escaped and sailed to France. He probably reached

[9] Dublin, Thomas Tegg & Co. 1840.

Paris in June 1794, and it was there that he met Mary, and that they became such good friends.

It may be assumed that they met soon after Mary's arrival in September 1794. In April 1795 they both left Paris in different directions. It is evident from Rowan's devotion to his wife, plainly displayed in every letter he wrote her and from the tone of their letters to each other, that his six months' intimacy with Mary was purely platonic.

What follows is from Rowan's *Autobiography*. He gives this record of their first meeting in a letter to his wife :

> On the day of the celebration of one of the numerous feasts with which this country has abounded . . . Mr. B(ingham) who was with me, joined a lady who spoke English, and who was followed by her maid with an infant in her arms, which I found belonged to the lady. Her manners were interesting and her conversation spirited, yet not out of her sex. B(ingham) whispered me that she was the author of the *Rights of Woman*. I started ! 'What !, said I within myself, 'this is Miss Mary Wollstonecraft, parading about with a child at her heels, with as little ceremony as if it were a watch she had just bought at the jeweler's. So much for the rights of women,' thought I. But upon further inquiry, I found that she had, very fortunately for her, married an American gentleman a short time before the passing of that decree which indiscriminately incarcerated all the British subjects who were at that moment in this country. My society, which before that time, was wholly male, was now most agreeably increased, and I got a dish of tea, and an hour's rational conversation whenever I called on her.

The relative duties of man and wife was frequently the topic of our conversation; and here I found myself deeply wounded; because if my dearest thought as Mrs. Imlay did, and many of their sentiments seemed to coincide, my happiness was at an end. I have sometimes told her so; but there must be something about me of deep deception, for I never seemed to have persuaded her that I had merited, or that you would treat me with the neglect that I then thought was my portion. Her account of Mr. Imlay made me wish for his acquaintance; and my description of my love made her desirous of your acquaintance, which it is possible may happen; and until you can decide for yourself, repay her, my dearest friend, some of those kind attentions I received from her when my heart was ill at ease. Mr. Imlay was expected over here; but his affairs keep him in England, and she is gone to join him.[1]

The following letter was also written by Rowan to his wife, from Paris, dated March 20, 1795. 'James Thomson' was the name he used while in exile.

This letter will probably be delivered to my inestimable friend, by the sister[2] of a lady formerly Mary Wollstonecraft, now Imlay, who has unknowingly given me many a heart ache, since (I have) had the pleasure of being acquainted with her. There is an avowal for you! Was ever any thing so impertinent? Yes, she has made my heart ache when she has persisted that no motive upon earth ought to make a man and wife live together a

[1] This last sentence plainly dates the letter as early as April 1795, since Rowan sailed from Havre only a few days after Mary had departed from the same place.

[2] Probably Eliza Bishop, then a teacher in a school in Dublin.

moment after mutual love and regard were gone. Now ill-usage and neglect naturally destroying the strongest attachment, I could not help reflecting that I was not to be pitied, because I deserved the fate which I then thought had befallen me. I at last told her of my supposed situation, and she said that if I painted you right, she thought I had no reason to be alarmed ; for that when a person whom we have loved was absent, all the faults he might have were diminished, and his virtues augmented in proportion ; and her prophecy has been true, and you have fulfilled it by the kind, affectionate letters you have sent me ; all of which, except one, have come to hand safe ; and I am now as happy as a man can be, whose dearest, and almost his only comfort is withheld from him, at least for some time. . . .

I have bought a watch for G. M. which shows the hours on one face, and the day of the month, day of the week, and name of the month on the other face ; Mrs. Imlay will take it over.

JAMES THOMSON.

Rowan makes one more reference, which reveals a hitherto unnoticed residence of Mary's (whence I am inclined to believe she wrote the letter to Mrs. Barlow which later appears) (see below, p. 261) :

During my residence at Paris I had become acquainted with Mary Wollstonecraft who had visited Paris with the intention of making herself acquainted with the true state of that country, and lived in a small cottage close to Paris. As Americans were then the only avowed foreigners protected in that city . . . an American family, of the name of Christie, with whom she was intimate, offered her an asylum at their house. There she became acquainted with Mr. Imlay, also an American, who

paid his addresses to her ; and partly as a safeguard against prosecution by being the wife of an American, she submitted to a republican marriage, and from that time she was called Mrs. Imlay. She took care of his house and commercial concerns during his absence on various speculations, and was treated as his wife by all who knew her. He had a house in Havre, whither she was then going with her infant daughter. She offered me a lodging there while waiting for a passage to America, and from thence, and from London, I received the following letters, which I add, as they show the state of her feelings at a remarkable period, when her case was pitiful.

Thomas Cooper, of Manchester (1759-1840), scientist author, lawyer, judge, and college president, appears in the *D.N.B.* Additional facts are contained in a little pamphlet [3] written by a member of the faculty of Dickinson School of Law, Carlisle, Penn., at which institution (when it was known as Dickinson College), Cooper was Professor of Chemistry. The monograph has a good portrait of Cooper.

Cooper was in Paris in 1792, and was associated there with Brissot and the Revolutionary party. In the following year he gave a letter to Imlay introducing him to Brissot ; and after his first American visit in 1794 he wrote a book about that country [4] which

[3] Life and Times / of / Judge Thomas Cooper / Jurist, Scientist, Educator, Author, Publicist / By / Professor Charles F. Himes, Ph.D., LL.D. / Dickinson School of Law / Carlisle, Pa. / 1918.

[4] Some Information / Respecting / America, / Collected by / Thomas Cooper, Late of Manchester. / London : / Printed for J. Johnson, in St. Paul's Church-Yard. / MDCCXCIV.

J. Johnson published and from which Mary quoted in her *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden.*

Mary thus referred to Cooper's book:

> A sensible writer [5] has lately observed (I have not his work by me, therefore cannot quote his exact words) 'that the americans very wisely let the europeans make their books and fashions for them.' But I cannot coincide with him in this opinion. The reflection necessary to produce a certain number of even tolerable productions, augments, more than he is aware of, the mass of knowledge in the community.

There remains Joel Barlow (1754-1812), American poet and diplomatist. With him, it will be remembered, Mary consulted in 1792 on the advisability of placing Charles on a farm in America. His wife, Ruth Baldwin, was a good friend of Mary and received two interesting letters from her.

An account of Barlow may be found in Appleton's *Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, and more particularly in a book entitled:

> Life and Letters of Joel Barlow, LL.D. Poet, Statesman, Philosopher. By Charles Burr Todd. New York: 1886.

Barlow was born in Reading, Conn.; graduated from Yale, 1778, delivering the Commencement Poem;[6]

[5] See Mr. Cooper's account of America.

[6] The Prospect of Peace, A Poetical Composition, Delivered in Yale College, at the Public Examination of the Candidates for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts; July 23, 1778, by Joel Barlow, Esq. New Haven: Printed by Thomas and Samuel Green, M.DCC.LXXVIII.

in 1780 he was chaplain of Poore's brigade of the Massachusetts line; married Ruth Baldwin of New Haven in 1781; settled in Hartford two years later, where, with Elisha Babcock, he founded *The American Mercury*, and was its editor during its short life. About this time he wrote and published his chief work: *The Vision of Columbus, A Poem in Nine Books*, which attracted so much favourable attention that he was offered the agency in France of the Scioto Land Co., to sell there the three million acres of Ohio land which the company claimed to have, to prospective settlers. Barlow sailed in May 1788, and apparently disposed of the land to a French syndicate; but it unfortunately turned out a losing venture to its investors, though from no fault on his part. Barlow remained in Paris, where his wife joined him, until about the middle of 1791, when conditions resulting from the Revolutionary uprising made life in that city unsafe. While he was there he translated Brissot's *Nouveau Voyage dans les Etat Unis d'Amerique Septentrionale*, Paris, 1791, calling his version *New Travels in the United States of America, Performed in 1788*.

In 1791 Barlow and his wife went to London and took lodgings in Lichfield Street, then the literary centre. Here they became friends with Mary. Johnson published three of Barlow's Revolutionary pamphlets in 1792.

"*She turned her eyes on her cruel master*"

From the original drawing by William Blake

(*cf.* above, pp. 207-12)

VI

1793-1794

IMLAY'S ABSENCE—ALONE IN PARIS—BIRTH OF FANNY—*AN HISTORICAL AND MORAL VIEW OF THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.*

MARY was in Paris at the beginning of 1793. She had made frequent visits of comfort to her friend von Schlabrendorf, then in prison, and it was 'about the middle of April' according to Godwin, that she first met Imlay at the Christie house. Not very long afterwards she left her 'lodgings at Neuilly,' and went to live with Imlay 'under the same roof.' In September he departed for Havre, giving the excuse of his business, and ostensibly for a short while only.

It was a sad year for Mary, for many of her own friends followed the king and queen to the guillotine. Brissot and twenty-one of his party underwent this fate in October, at the news of which she says she suffered 'one of the most intolerable sensations she had ever experienced'; and in November both the Rolands died: she, bravely, by the guillotine; he, on his own sword, from grief at her death.

A short time after Imlay had departed from Havre, Mary now first realised that she was with child. She wrote to Imlay :

Sunday night.

> Ever since you last saw me inclined to faint, I have felt some gentle twitches, which makes me begin to think, that I am nourishing a creature who will soon be sensible of my care.—This thought has not only produced an overflowing of tenderness to you, but made me very attentive to calm my mind and take exercise, lest I should destroy an object, in whom we are to have a mutual interest, you know.[1]

Mary, alone in Paris, with all the tragic events of that dreadful year going on before her, very naturally longed for Imlay's prompt return, and wrote him :

Sunday morning. [December 29, 1793].

> You seem to have taken up your abode at H[avre]. Pray sir ! when do you think of coming home ? or, to write very considerately, when will business permit you ? I shall expect (as the country people say in England) that you will make a *power* of money to indemnify me for your absence.[2]

Imlay, apparently, returned no satisfactory reply, and ' the growing cruelties of Robespierre ' determined her to wait no longer, but to set out for Havre by herself.

She arrived there in January ; her child was born in May ; and from then until September, when Imlay made his final departure—though little did Mary dream that it was final—she passed what was probably the happiest part of her life.

[1] Letter v. *Posthumous Works*, iii. p. 11.
[2] Letter vii. *Posthumous Works*, iii. 17.

The birth was not at all a difficult one. After Imlay had gone and Mary had returned to Paris, she wrote to Everina:

Paris, Sept. 20th [1792].

. . . I want you to see my little girl, who is more like a boy. She is ready to fly away with spirits, and has eloquent health in her cheeks and eyes. She does not promise to be a beauty, but appears wonderfully intelligent, and though I am sure she has her father's quick temper and feelings, her good humour runs away with all the credit of my good nursing.

I managed myself so well that my lying-in scarcely deserves the name. I only rested, through persuasion, in bed one day, and was out a-walking on the eighth. She is now only four months old. She caught the smallpox at Havre, where they treat the dreadful disorder very improperly. I however determined to follow the suggestion of my own reason, and saved her much pain, probably her life, for she was very full, by putting her twice a-day into a warm bath. . . . You will see the last vol. I have written, it is the commencement of a considerable work.[3]

It was while she and Imlay were still in Havre, dwelling happily together, that she wrote the following letter to her friend Ruth Barlow, then in London:

Havre, July 8th, '94.

My dear Friend,

I received but the other day your letter of May the 6th, and since then I have written to you or Mr. B. several times—yesterday, I find, by a letter

[3] Kegan Paul, *William Godwin*, i. 220. The 'last vol.' is her *French Revolution*, which, although labelled 'Volume the First,' was never accompanied by another volume.

from Mr. B. that he wrote to me by the Dane, enclosing one from Charles.—It would have given me great pleasure to have received this letter, but, as I fear I shall never see it, I must beg you, or Mr. B. to endeavour to recollect the substance of it, for I long to hear *how* Charles has succeeded.—Tell me likewise, at the same time, what Mr. J[ohnson] says, for I cannot get a line from him.

I am very well, and my little girl not only uncommonly healthy, but already, as sagacious as a child of five or six months old, which I rather attribute to my good, that is natural, manner of nursing her, than to any extraordinary strength of faculties. She has not tasted anything but my milk, of which I have abundance, since her birth, yet, as I intend to begin to teach her to eat in a month or two, I must beg you to send me, if possible, some more of those fine biscuits, for the bread commonly made here is worse than ever, and I get no more of the good.

I am glad to find that you are pleasantly situated, and hope to hear that you are again become fat and well likened. Mrs. Shean popt on me about a fortnight ago, instead of surprising you, which was her intention.—She was delighted with the reception and pleasures of England, not forgetting the delight of travelling in a Coach and four on the Bristol road, &c.—Entre nous, I believe she was glad to get rid of Mrs. Blackden. She return[ed] to France in consequence of the information she received of the precarious state of her husband's health.

Mr. Imlay has not been well for some weeks past, and during the last few days he has [been] seriously feverish. His mind has been harass[ed] by continual disappointments.—Sh[ips] do not return, and the government is perpetually throwing impediments in the way of business. I cannot help sharing his disquietude, because the fulfilling of

engagements appears to me of more importance than the making of a fortune. Of the state of things here, and the decree against the English I will not speak.—The French will carry all before them—but, my God, how many victims fall beneath the sword and the guillotine! My blood runs cold, and I sicken at thoughts of a Revolution which costs so much blood and bitter tears.

Remember me to your husband. Adieu!

Yours Sincerely
MARY.

I will send you a new vial by the first opportunity.

Removing to another house the papers were disordered and I have not now time to regulate them.

Mr. I. has just desired me not to send the papers lest they should endanger. I will forward them by Clough.[4]

Mary's recollections of Fanny's infancy she recorded in the fourteen 'Lessons' which Godwin printed at the end of the second volume of *Posthumous Works*. His 'Advertisement' which precedes them runs as follows:

THE following pages will, I believe, be judged by every reader of taste to have been worth preserving, among the other testimonies the author left behind her, of her genius and the soundness of her understanding. To such readers I leave the task of comparing these lessons, with other works of the

[4] This most interesting letter is here first printed. The original is in the Chamberlain Collection of the Public Library of the City of Boston. The first three pairs of brackets supply obvious omissions in the original; the last three, letters torn off. I can give no news of 'Mrs. Shean'; Todd, Barlow's biographer, does not mention her. 'Mrs. Blackden' was one of Ruth Barlow's friends, and is mentioned in Mary's next letter.

same nature previously published. It is obvious that the author has struck out a path of her own, and by no means intrenched upon the plans of her predecessors.[5]

The brief extracts which follow are plainly those that refer to little Fanny. The writer is speaking to her child about a young puppy, playing near at hand.

> How did you do when you were a baby like him? You cannot tell. Do you want to know? Look then at the dog, with her pretty puppy. You could not help yourself as well as the puppy. You could only open your mouth, when you were lying on my knee. So I put you to my breast, and you sucked, as the puppy sucks now, for there was milk enough for you.
>
> When you were hungry you began to cry, because you could not speak. You were seven months without teeth, always sucking. But after you got one, you began to gnaw a crust of bread. It was not long before another came pop. At ten months you had four pretty white teeth, and you used to bite me. Poor mamma! Still I did not cry, because I am not a child, but you hurt me very much. So I said to papa, it is time the little girl should eat. She is not naughty, yet she hurts me. I have given her a crust of bread, and I must look for some other milk. . . .
>
> You were then on the carpet, for you could not walk well. So when you were in a hurry, you used to run quick, quick, quick, on your hands and feet, like the dog. . . .[6]

I am able to give here one more letter that Mary wrote to Ruth Barlow. It is not dated, but I believe

[5] *Posthumous Works*, ii. 171, 2. [6] *Ibid.* ii. 181-3.

it was written in the late fall or early winter of 1794, and since its contents show that the writer could not have been very far from Paris, I think it likely that Mary was then dwelling in the 'small cottage near Paris,' which Rowan mentions, and where he had his tea and conversations with her. The letter is addressed 'a la Citoyenne Barlow, Hotel de la Grands Bretagne, Rue Jacob, Faubourg St. Germain.'

My dear Friend,

A word or two which dropt from you, when I last saw you, for circumstances scarcely allowed me to speak to you, have run in my head ever since —Why cannot we meet and breakfast together, *quite alone*, as in days of yore? I will tell you how—will you meet me at the Bath about 8 o'clock either monday or tuesday?—I will come on monday unless it should rain, or you write to forbid me.—We may then breakfast in your favourite place and chat as long as we please before we part to return to our respective homes, for I do not wish to spend a whole day in Paris for a little time to come and when I do I must visit Madame Schweizer.

Yours affectionately,

M. Wollstonecraft.

Friday afternoon

Remember the pills ! ! —
and do not forget to ask Mrs. Stone
what is become of Schlabberndorf—
give my love to Mrs. Blackden.[7]

[7] This letter is here printed for the first time. For the transcript and permission to use it, I am indebted to the courtesy of Mr. Simon Gratz of Philadelphia, the former owner of the original which now forms part of the Simon Gratz Collection in the Philadelphia home of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Some attention must here be given to the book which, according to Godwin, Mary 'commenced and for the most part executed' while dwelling in the house of Mme. Filliettaz in the winter and spring of 1793, and completed at Havre in 1794 during her stay there from January to September. It was published towards the end of the year, and bore the long title: *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution And the Effect it has Produced in Europe.*

It is Kegan Paul's opinion that Mary

> goes carefully into the whole state of society and politics, and into the causes of the Revolution, in a most masterly way; her remarks are throughout characterised by a singular moderation, and the work is, I think, the best balanced and most philosophical book on the revolution, as far as it had then gone.

The anonymous author of *A Defence*, etc., goes even further in his praise for this book. He declares that this History:

> in judiciousness of general remark as an analysis of politic events, and correctness of historical narrative, is not *second* to the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. It contains no affectation of style, no misstatements of facts, no sympathies that were not warmly felt in the heart of the author.

A copy of this book was in the Library of John Adams (1735-1826), who succeeded Washington as President of the United States, and was its first minister to England, in 1785. In this copy, now, with the rest of his Library, in the Public Library of the City of Boston, Adams has inscribed, on the margins,

many of his dissenting opinions.[8] On the page facing the Preface he wrote this comment :

> This is a Lady of a masculine masterly Understanding. Her style is nervous and clear often elegant, though sometimes too verbose. With a little Experience in Public Affairs and the Reading and Reflection which would result from it, She would have produced a History without the Defects and Blemishes pointed out with too much Severity perhaps and too little Gallantry in the Notes.
>
> The Improvement, the exaltation of the human Character, the perfectibility of Man, the Perfection of the human Faculties are the divine Objects which her Enthusiasm beholds in beatificism. Alas how airy and baseless a fabrick !
>
> Yet she will not admit of the only means that can accomplish any Part of her ardent Prophecies, Forms of Government, so mixed, combined and ballanced as to restrain the Passions of all orders of Men.

Mary wrote this book under difficulties. She could have had no way of getting first hand information on the events described, unless possibly from Brissot or the Rolands, and her account of Marie Antoinette, as Kegan Paul admits ' could not but depend on Paris gossip.' Since the book extends only to the forced removal of the royal family from Versailles to Paris, she had to write of events that had transpired nearly three years before her arrival.

For my own part I must admit that I cannot view this volume with the same admiration that I have for most of Mary's books. It seems to me to contain

[8] The complete notes may be consulted in *The Bulletin of the Public Library of the City of Boston*, Fourth Series, vol. i. No. 1, January, 1923.

more examples of the literary faults which sometimes appeared in Mary's writing—I refer particularly to prolixity and a lack of logical, orderly progression—than will be found in her other works.

In the way of extracts, I shall give only a few remarks on the queen and Mary's own impression on visiting forsaken Versailles.

> The unfortunate queen of France, beside the advantages of birth and station, possessed a very fine person; and her lovely face, sparkling with vivacity, hid the want of intelligence. Her complexion was dazzlingly clear; and, when she was pleased, her manners were bewitching; for she happily mingled the most insinuating voluptuous softness and affability, with an air of grandeur, bordering on pride, that rendered the contrast more striking. Independence also of whatever kind, always gives a degree of dignity to the mien; so that monarchs and nobles, with most ignoble souls, from believing themselves superior to others, have actually acquired a look of superiority.
>
> But her opening faculties were poisoned in the bud; for before she came to Paris, she had already been prepared, by a corrupt, supple abbé, for the part she was to play; and young as she was, became so firmly attached to the aggrandisement of her house, that, though plunged deep in pleasure she never omitted sending immense sums to her brother on every occasion. The person of the king, in itself very disgusting, was rendered more so by gluttony, and a total disregard of delicacy, and even decency in his apartments; and, when jealous of the queen, for whom he had a kind of devouring passion, he treated her with great brutality, till she acquired sufficient finesse to subjugate him. Is it then surprizing, that a very desirable woman, with a

sanguine constitution, should shrink abhorrent from his embraces; or that an empty mind should be employed only to vary the pleasures which emasculated her circean court? And, added to this the histories of the Julias and Messalinas of antiquity convincingly prove that there is no end to the vagaries of the imagination, when power is unlimited, and reputation set at defiance.

Lost then in the most luxurious pleasures, or managing court intrigues, the queen became a profound dissembler; and her heart hardened by sensual enjoyments to such a degree, that when her family and favourites stood on the brink of ruin, her little portion of mind was employed only to preserve herself from danger. As a proof of the justness of this assertion, it is only necessary to observe, that, in the general wreck, not a scrap of her writing has been found to criminate her; neither has she suffered a word to escape her to exasperate the people, even when burning with rage and contempt. The effect that adversity may have on her choked understanding time will show;[9] but during her prosperity, the moments of languor, that glide into the interstices of enjoyment, were passed in the most childish manner; without the appearance of any vigour of mind, to palliate the wanderings of the imagination.—Still she was a woman of uncommon address; and though her conversation was insipid, her compliments were so artfully adapted to flatter the person she wished to please or dupe, and so eloquent is the beauty of a queen, in the eyes of even superior men, that she seldom failed to carry her point when she endeavoured to gain an ascendancy over the mind of an individual. Over that of the king she acquired unbounded sway, when, managing the disgust she

[9] This was written a few months before the death of the queen.

had for his person, she made him pay a kingly price for her favours (pp. 131 *et seq.*).

The following description is one of the few written from first-hand knowledge :

> How silent is now Versailles !—The solitary foot, that mounts the sumptuous stair-case, rests on each landing-place whilst the eye traverses the void, almost expecting to see the strong images of fancy burst into life.—The train of the Louises, like the posterity of the Banquoes, pass in solemn sadness, pointing at the nothingness of grandeur, fading away on the cold canvas, which covers the nakedness of the spacious walls—whilst the gloominess of the atmosphere gives a deeper shade to the gigantic figures, that seem to be sinking into the embraces of death.
>
> Warily entering the endless apartments, half shut up, the fleeting shadow of the pensive wanderer, reflected in long glasses, that vainly gleam in every direction, slacken the nerves, without appalling the heart ; though lascivious pictures, in which grace varnishes voluptuousness, no longer seductive, strike continually home to the bosom the melancholy moral that anticipates the frozen lesson of experience. The very air is chill, seeming to clog the breath ; and the wasting dampness of destruction appears to be stealing into the vast pile from every side.
>
> The oppressed heart seeks for relief in the garden ; but even there the same images glide along the wide neglected walks—all is fearfully still and, if a little rill creeping through the gathering moss down the cascade, over which it used to rush, bring to mind the description of the grand water works, it is only to excite a languid smile at the futile attempt to equal nature.
>
> Lo ! this was the abode of the great king !—the abode of magnificence ! Who has broken the

charm?—Why does it now inspire only pity?—Why;—because nature, smiling around, presents to the imagination materials to build farms, and hospitable mansions, where, without raising idle admiration, that gladness will reign, which opens the heart to benevolence, and that industry, which renders innocent pleasures sweet. (p. 161.)

VII

1794–1795

MARY'S LETTERS TO IMLAY—HER JOURNEY TO SWEDEN.

Soon after Imlay's departure to London, in September 1794, Mary, with Fanny and the French maid, returned to Paris after a most disastrous journey, which 'proved' as Godwin has informed us, 'the most fatiguing she ever made; the carriage, in which she travelled, being overturned no less than four times between Havre and Paris.'

Until her departure in April 1795 to join Imlay in London, she wrote many passionate and sorrowful letters to her absent lover.

There are, perhaps, no other published letters in existence that touch the heart as do these of Mary's. Godwin, in his preface to their first edition, says:

> The following Letters may possibly be found to contain the finest examples of the language of sentiment and passion ever presented to the world. . . . They are the offspring of a glowing imagination, and a heart penetrated with the passion it essays to describe.

No apology is needed for considerable quotation here, with such comment as it is now possible to supply.

"The Dog strove to attract his attention"

From the original drawing by William Blake

(*cf.* above, pp. 207-13)

To the first letter which appears here [1] Godwin affixed this note :

> This is the first of a series of letters written during a separation of many months, to which no cordial meeting ever succeeded. They were sent from Paris, and bear the address of London.

September 22 [1794].

I have just written two letters, that are going by other conveyances, and which I reckon on your receiving long before this. I therefore merely write, because I know I should be disappointed at seeing any one who had left you, if you did not send a letter, were it ever so short, to tell me why you did not write a longer—and you will want to be told, over and over again, that our little Hercules is quite recovered.

Besides looking at me, there are three other things, which delight her—to ride in a coach, to look at a scarlet waistcoat, and hear loud music—yesterday, at the *fete*, she enjoyed the two latter ; but, to Honour J. J. Rousseau, I intend to give her a sash, the first she has ever had round her—and why not ?—for I have always been half in love with him.

Well, this you will say is trifling—shall I talk about alum or soap ? There is nothing picturesque in your present pursuits ; my imagination then rather chuses to ramble back to the barrier with you, or to see you coming to meet me, and my basket of grapes.—With what pleasure do I recollect your looks and words, when I have been sitting on the window, regarding the waving corn !

Believe me, sage sir, you have not sufficient respect for the imagination—I could prove to you

[1] No. XXIII. in the series printed by Kegan Paul (*Mary Wollstonecraft : Letters to Imlay*. London. 1879.)

in a trice that it is the mother of sentiment, the great distinction of our nature, the only purifier of our passions—animals have a portion of reason, and equal, if not more exquisite, senses; but no trace of imagination, or her offspring taste, appears in any of their actions. The impulse of the senses, passions, if you will, and the conclusions of reason, draw men together; but the imagination is the true fire, stolen from heaven, to animate this cold creature of clay, producing all those fine sympathies that lead to rapture, rendering men social by expanding their hearts, instead of leaving them leisure to calculate how many comforts society affords.

If you call these observations romantic, a phrase in this place which would be tantamount to nonsensical, I shall be apt to retort, that you are embruted by trade, and the vulgar enjoyments of life—Bring me then back your barrier-face, or you shall have nothing to say to my barrier-girl;[2] and I shall fly from you, to cherish the remembrances that will ever be dear to me; for I am yours truly

* * * *

Evening, Sept. 23 [1794].

I have been playing and laughing with the little girl so long, that I cannot take up my pen to address you without emotion. Pressing her to my bosom, she looked so like you (*entre nous*, your best looks,

[2] The first mention of this 'barrier'—an object of general occurrence in Revolutionary Paris—is in Letter II. of this series, written from Paris in August 1793. In the postscript Mary makes a rendezvous with Imlay; she says: 'I will be at the barrier a little after ten o'clock tomorrow, Yours * * * *.'

To this letter Godwin appends a footnote: 'The child is in a subsequent letter called the "barrier-girl," probably from a supposition that she owed her existence to this interview.'—EDITOR.

for I do not admire your commercial face) every nerve seemed to vibrate to the touch, and I began to think that there was something in the assertion of man and wife being one—for you seemed to pervade my whole frame, quickening the beat of my heart, and lending me the sympathetic tears you excited. . . .

Public affairs I do not descant on, except to tell you that they write now with great freedom and truth, and this liberty of the press will overthrow the Jacobins, I plainly perceive.

I hope you take care of your health. I have got a habit of restlessness at night, which arises, I believe, from activity of mind; for, when I am alone, that is not near one to whom I can open my heart, I sink into reveries and trains of thinking, which agitate and fatigue me.

This is my third letter; when am I to hear from you? I need not tell you, I suppose, that I am now writing with somebody in the room with me, and —— is waiting to carry this to Mr. ——'s. I will then kiss the girl for you, and bid you adieu.

I desired you, in one of my other letters, to bring back to me your barrier-face—or that you should not be loved by my barrier-girl. I know that you will love her more and more, for she is a little affectionate, intelligent creature, with as much vivacity, I should think, as you could wish for.

. . . Madame S—— is by me, reading a German translation of your letters [3]—she desires me to give her love to you, on account of what you say of the negroes.

Yours most affectionately,

* * * *

[3] 'Madame S' is of course Madeleine Schweizer, who was reading a German edition of Imlay's *Topographical Description*, which book was written in the form of letters.

Paris, Sept. 28 [1794].

. . . I cannot help being anxious to hear from you ; but I shall not harass you with accounts of inquietudes, or of cares that arise from peculiar circumstances.—I have had so many little plagues here, that I have almost lamented that I left H[avre]. ——, who is at best a helpless creature, is now, on account of her pregnancy, more trouble than use to me, so that I still continue to be almost a slave to the child.—She indeed rewards me, for she is a sweet little creature ; for, setting aside a mother's fondness (which, by the bye, is growing on me, her little intelligent smiles sinking into my heart), she has an astonishing degree of sensibility and observation. The other day by B——'s child, a fine one, she looked like a little sprite.—She is all life and emotion, and her eyes are not the eyes of a fool—I will swear.

I slept at St. Germain's, in the very room (if you have not forgot) in which you pressed me very tenderly to your heart.—I did not forget to fold my darling to mine, with sensations that are almost too sacred to be alluded to.

Adieu, my love ! Take care of yourself, if you wish to be the protector of your child, and the comfort of her mother. . . .

Your own

* * * *

October 1 [1794].

It is a heartless task to write letters, without knowing whether they will ever reach you.—I have given two to ——, who has been a-going, a-going, every day, for a week past ; and three others, which were written in a low-spirited strain, a little querulous or so, I have not been able to forward by the opportunities that were mentioned to me. . . . I have just now stumbled on one of the kind letters,

which you wrote me during your last absence. You are then a dear affectionate creature, and I will not plague you. The letter which you chance to receive, when the absence is so long, ought to bring only tears of tenderness, without any bitter alloy, into your eyes.

After your return I hope indeed, that you will not be too immersed in business, as during the last three or four months past—for even money, taking into the account all the future comforts it is to procure, may be gained at too dear a rate, if painful impressions are left on the mind.—These impressions were much more lively, soon after you went away, than at present—for a thousand tender recollections efface the melancholy traces they left on my mind—and every emotion is on the same side as my reason, which always was on yours.—Separated, it would be almost impious to dwell on real or imaginary imperfections of character.—I feel that I love you ; and, if I cannot be happy with you, I will see it no where else.

My little darling grows every day more dear to me—and she often has a kiss, when we are alone together, which I give her for you, with all my heart. . . .

Yours most truly and affectionately,

* * * *

October 26 [1794].

My dear love, I began to wish so earnestly to hear from you, that the sight of your letters occasioned such pleasurable emotions, I was obliged to throw them aside till the little girl and I were alone together ; and this said little girl, our darling, is become a most intelligent little creature, and as gay as a lark, and that in the morning too, which I do not find so convenient. I once told you, that the sensations before she was born, and when she is

sucking, were pleasant; but they do not deserve to be compared to the emotions I feel, when she stops to smile upon me, or laughs outright on meeting me unexpectedly in the street, or after a short absence. She has now the advantage of having two good nurses, and I am at present able to discharge my duty to her, without being the slave of it.

I have therefore employed and amused myself since I got rid of ——, and am making a progress in the language amongst other things. I have also made some new acquaintance. I have almost *charmed* a judge of the tribunal, R—— who, though I should not have thought it possible, has humanity, if not *beaucoup d'esprit*. But let me tell you, if you do not make haste back, I shall be half in love with the author of the *Marseillaise*, who is a handsome man, a little too broad-faced or, so, and plays sweetly on the violin.

What do you say to this threat?—why, *entre nous*, I like to give way to a sprightly vein, when I am pleased with you. 'The devil,' you know, is proverbially said to be 'in a good humour when he is pleased.' Will you not then be a good boy, and come back quickly to play with your girls? but I shall not allow you to love the new-comer best.

. . . My heart longs for your return, my love, and only looks for, and seeks happiness with you; yet do not imagine that I childishly wish you to come back, before you have arranged things in such a manner that it will not be necessary for you to leave us soon again, or to make exertions which injure your constitution.

Yours most truly and tenderly,

* * * *

P.S. You would oblige me by delivering the inclosed to Mr. ——, and pray call for an answer.—It is for a person uncomfortably situated.

Dec. 26 [1794].

I have been, my love, for some days tormented by fears, that I would not allow to assume a form—I had been expecting you daily—and I heard that many vessels had been driven on shore during the late gale.—Well, I now see your letter—and feel that you are safe; I will not regret then that your exertions have hitherto been so unavailing. . . .

Be that as it may, return to me when you have arranged the other matters, which —— has been crowding on you. I want to be sure that you are safe—and not separated from me by a sea that must be passed. For, feeling that I am happier than I ever was, do you wonder at my sometimes dreading that fate has not done persecuting me? Come to me, my dearest friend, husband, father of my child!—All these fond ties glow at my heart at this moment, and dim my eyes.—With you an independence is desirable; and it is always within our reach, if affluence escapes us—without you the world again appears empty to me. But I am recurring to some of the melancholy thoughts that have flitted across my mind for some days past, and haunted my dreams.

My little darling is indeed a sweet child; and I am sorry that you are not here, to see her little mind unfold itself. You talk of 'dalliance'; but certainly no lover was ever more attached to his mistress, than she is to me. Her eyes follow me everywhere, and by affection I have the most despotic power over her. She is all vivacity or softness—yes; I love her more than I thought I should. When I have been hurt at your stay, I have embraced her as my only comfort—when pleased with you, for looking and laughing like you; nay, I cannot, I find, long be angry with you, whilst I am kissing her for resembling you. But there would

be no end to these details. Fold us both to your heart; for I am truly and affectionately

Yours

* * * *

December 28 [1794].

. . . I do, my love, indeed sincerely sympathize with you in all your disappointments.—Yet, knowing that you are well, and think of me with affection, I only lament other disappointments, because I am sorry that you should thus exert yourself in vain, and that you are kept from me. . . .

Would it not now be possible to arrange your business in such a manner as to avoid the inquietudes, of which I have had my share since your departure? Is it now possible to enter into business, as an employment necessary to keep the faculties awake, and (to sink a little in the expressions) the pot boiling, without suffering what must ever be considered as a secondary object, to engross the mind, and drive sentiment and affection out of the heart? . . .

Stay, my friend, whilst it is *absolutely* necessary. —I will give no tenderer name, though it glows at my heart, unless you come the moment the settling the *present* objects permit.—*I do not consent* to your taking any other journey—or the little woman and I will be off, the Lord knows where. But, as I had rather owe every thing to your affection, and, I may add, to your reason (for this immoderate desire of wealth, which makes —— so eager to have you remain, is contrary to your principles of action), I will not importune you.—I will only tell you, that I long to see you—and, being at peace with you, I shall be hurt, rather than made angry, by delays. —Having suffered so much in life, do not be surprised if I sometimes, when left by myself, grow gloomy, and suppose that it was all a dream, and

that my happiness is not to last. I say happiness, because remembrance retrenches all the dark shades of the picture.

My little one begins to show her teeth, and use her legs—She wants you to bear your part in the nursing business, for I am fatigued with dancing her, and yet she is not satisfied—she wants you to thank her mother for taking such care of her, as you only can.

Yours truly,

* * * *

December 29 [1794].

. . . How I hate this crooked business! This intercourse with the world, which obliges one to see the worst side of human nature! Why cannot you be content with the object you had first in view, when you entered into this wearisome labyrinth?—I know very well that you have imperceptibly been drawn on; yet why does one project, successful or abortive, only give place to two others? Is it not sufficient to avoid poverty?—I am contented to do my part; and even here, sufficient to escape from wretchedness is not difficult to obtain. And, let me tell you, I have my project also—and, if you do not soon return, the little girl and I will take care of ourself; we will not accept any of your cold kindness—your distant civilities—no; not we. . . .

I will own to you that, feeling extreme tenderness for my little girl, I grow sad very often when I am playing with her, that you are not here, to observe with me how her mind unfolds, and her little heart becomes attached! These appear to me to be true pleasures—and still you suffer them to escape you, in search of what we may never enjoy.—It is your own maxim to 'live in the present moment.'—*If you do*—stay, for God's sake; but tell me the truth

—if not, tell me when I may expect to see you, and let me not be always vainly looking for you, till I grow sick at heart.

Adieu! I am a little hurt.—I must take my darling to my bosom to console me.

* * * *

December 30 [1794].

. . . I do not like this life of continual disquietude —and, *entre nous*, I am determined to try to earn some money here myself, in order to convince you that, if you chuse to run about the world and get a fortune, it is for yourself—for the little girl and I will live without your assistance unless you are with us. I may be termed proud—Be it so—but I will never abandon certain principles of action. . . .

I have gotten into a melancholy mood, you perceive. You know my opinion of men in general, you know that I think them systematic tyrants, and that it is the rarest thing in the world, to meet with a man with sufficient delicacy of feeling to govern desire. When I am thus sad, I lament that my little darling, fondly as I doat on her, is a girl.—I am sorry to have a tie to a world that for me is ever sown with thorns.

. . . You have always known my opinion—I have ever declared that two people, who mean to live together, ought not to be long separated.—If certain things are more necessary to you than me —search for them—say but one word, and you shall never hear of me more.—If not, for God's sake, let me struggle with poverty—with any evil, but these continual disquietudes of business, which I have been told were to last but a few months, though every day the end appears more distant! This is the first letter in this strain that I have determined to forward to you; the rest lie by,

because I was unwilling to give you pain, and I should not now write, if I did not think there would be no conclusion to the schemes, which demand, I am told, your presence.[4]

* * * *

January 9 [1795].

I just now received one of your hasty *notes*; for business so entirely occupies you, that you have not time, or sufficient command of thought, to write letters. Beware! you seem to be got into a whirl of projects and schemes, which are drawing you into a gulph, that, if it do not absorb your happiness, will infallibly destroy mine.

Fatigued during my youth by the most arduous struggles, not only to obtain independence, but to render myself useful, not merely pleasure, for which I had the most lively taste, I mean the simple pleasures that flow from passion and affection, escaped me, but the most melancholy views of life were impressed by a disappointed heart on my mind. Since I knew you, I have been endeavouring to go back to my former nature, and have allowed some time to glide away, winged with the delight which only spontaneous enjoyment can give.—Why have you so soon dissolved the charm? . . . I should have been content, and still wish, to retire with you to a farm—My God! anything but commerce, which debases the mind, and roots out affection from the heart. . . .

Still as you talk of your return, even in February, doubtingly, I have determined, the moment the weather changes, to wean my child.—It is too soon for her to begin to divide sorrow!—And as one has well said 'despair is a freeman,' we will go and seek our fortune together.

[4] Imlay was about this time at Ramsgate, professedly on his way to Paris. But he returned in fact to London, pleading a sudden pressure of business.

This is not a caprice of the moment—for your absence has given new weight to some conclusions, that I was very reluctantly forming before you left me.—I do not chuse to be a secondary object.—If your feelings were in unison with mine, you would not sacrifice so much to visionary projects of future advantage.

* * * *

January 15 [1795].

I was just going to begin my letter with the fag end of a song, which would only have told you, what I may as well say simply, that it is pleasant to forgive those we love. I have received your two letters, dated the 26th and 28th of December, and my anger died away. . . .

My animal is well; I have not yet taught her to eat, but nature is doing the business. I gave her a crust to assist the cutting of her teeth; and now she has two, she makes good use of them to gnaw a crust, biscuit, &c. You would laugh to see her; she is just like a little squirrel; she will guard a crust for two hours; and, after fixing her eye on an object for some time, dart on it with an aim as sure as a bird of prey—nothing can equal her life and spirits. I suffer from a cold; but it does not affect her. Adieu! do not forget to love us—and come soon to tell us that you do.

* * * *

January 30 [1795].

From the purport of your last letters, I should suppose that this will scarcely reach you; and I have already written so many letters, that you have either not received, or neglected to acknowledge. I do not find it pleasant, or rather I have no inclination, to go over the same ground again. . . .

My child is well, and the spring will perhaps restore me to myself.— . . . 'The secondary plea-

sures of life,' you say, 'are very necessary to my comfort'; it may be so; but I have ever considered them as secondary. If therefore you accuse me of wanting the resolution necessary to bear the *common* [5] evils of life; I should answer, that I have not fashioned my mind to sustain them, because I would avoid them, cost what it would. . . .

Adieu!

* * * *

February 9 [1795].

. . . You left me indisposed, though you have taken no notice of it; and the most fatiguing journey I ever had [6] contributed to continue it. However, I recovered my health; but a neglected cold, and continual inquietude during the last two months, have reduced me to a state of weakness I never before experienced. Those who did not know that the canker-worm was at work at the core, cautioned me about suckling my child too long.—God preserve this poor child, and render her happier than her mother!

. . . I did not expect this blow from you. I have done my duty to you and my child; and if I am not to have any return of affection to reward me, I have the sad consolation of knowing that I deserved a better fate. My soul is weary—I am sick at heart; and, but for this little darling, I would cease to care about a life, which is now stripped of every charm.

. . . I meant simply to tell you, that I consider your requesting me to come to you, as merely dictated by honour.—Indeed, I scarcely understand you—You request me to come, and then tell me,

[5] This probably alludes to some expression of the person to whom the letters are addressed, in which he treated as common evils, things upon which the letter-writer was disposed to bestow a different appellation. [Godwin's note.]

[6] Sept. 1794. Havre to Paris.

that you have not given up all thoughts of returning to this place.

When I determined to live with you, I was only governed by affection.—I would share poverty with you, but turn with affright from the sea of troubles on which you are entering. . . . I can still exert myself to obtain the necessaries of life for my child, and she does not want more at present.—I have two or three plans in my head to earn our subsistence; for do not suppose that, neglected by you, I will lie under obligations of a pecuniary kind to you!—No; I would sooner submit to menial service,—I wanted the support of your affection—that gone, all is over! . . . .

I cannot write.—I inclose a fragment of a letter written soon after your departure, and another which tenderness made me keep back when it was written.—You will see then the sentiments of a calmer, though a not more determined, moment.—Do not insult me by saying that 'our being together is paramount to every other consideration!' Were it, you would not be running after a bubble, at the expence of my peace of mind.

Perhaps this is the last letter you will ever receive from me.

* * * *

Feb. 10 [1795].

You talk of 'permanent views and future comfort'—not for me, for I am dead to hope. The inquietudes of the last winter have finished the business, and my heart is not only broken, but my constitution destroyed. I conceive myself in a galloping consumption, and the continual anxiety I feel at the thought of leaving my child, feeds the fever that nightly devours me. It is on her account that I again write to you, to conjure you, by all that you hold sacred, to leave her here with the German lady you may have heard me mention!

She has a child of the same age, and they may be brought up together, as I wish her to be brought up. . . . To facilitate this, I shall give up my present lodgings, and go into the same house. I can live much cheaper there, which is now become an object . . . I shall entirely give up the acquaintance of the Americans.

When you first entered into these plans, you bounded your views to the gaining of a thousand pounds. It was sufficient to have procured a farm in America, which would have been an independence. You now find that you did not know yourself, and that a certain situation in life is more necessary to you than you imagined—more necessary than an uncorrupted heart—For a year or two, you may procure yourself what you call pleasure; eating, drinking, and women; but, in the solitude of declining life, I shall be remembered with regret—I was going to say with remorse, but checked my pen.

As I have never concealed the nature of my connection with you [7] your reputation will not

[7] Mary had already informed her sisters of this 'connection' in a letter from Havre, March 10, 1794, in which she says:

> If any of the many letters I have written have come to your hands, or Eliza's, you know that I am safe, through the protection of an American, a most worthy man, who joins in uncommon tenderness of heart and quickness of feeling, a soundness of understanding and reasonableness of temper rarely to be met with. Having been brought up in the interior parts of America, he is a most natural, unaffected creature. I am with him now at Havre, and shall remain there, till circumstances point out what is necessary for me to do. . . .
>
> Where is poor Eliza? From a letter I received many months after it was written, I suppose she is in Ireland.

In another letter to her sisters (printed by Kegan Paul in *William Godwin*, i. 219-19) she had written:

> As you must, my dear girl, have received several letters from me, especially one I sent to London by Mr. Imlay, I

suffer. I shall never have a confident: I am content with the approbation of my own mind; and if there is a searcher of hearts, mine will not be despised. Reading what you have written relative to the desertion of women, I have often wondered how theory and practice could be so different, till I recollected, that the sentiments of passion, and the resolves of reason, are very distinct. . . . God bless you! Adieu!

* * * *

avail myself of this opportunity to tell you that I am well and my child, and to request you to write by this occasion. I do indeed long to hear from you and Eliza. I have at last got some tidings of Charles, and as they must have reached you, I need not tell you what sincere satisfaction they have afforded me. I have also heard from James, he too talks of success, but in a querulous strain. What are you doing? Where is Eliza?

And that hypocrite, Imlay, had himself written to Eliza Bishop (from Kegan Paul, *William Godwin*, i. 217):

My dear Madam,

Mr. Johnson gave me your acceptable favor enclosing one from Mrs. Imlay, saying it was for her, which leaving me ignorant of being included, I could not return an immediate answer; since which time I have been out of town.

As to your sister's visiting England, I do not think she will previous to a peace, and perhaps not immediately after such an event. However, be that as it may, we shall both of us continue to cherish feelings of tenderness for you, and a recollection of your unpleasant situation, and we shall also endeavour to alleviate its distress by all the means in our power. The present state of our fortune is rather [low?] . . . I shall always be most happy to receive your letters, but as I shall most likely leave England the beginning of next week, I will thank you to let me hear from you as soon as convenient, and tell me ingenously in what way I can serve you in any manner or respect. I am in but indifferent spirits occasioned by my long absence from Mrs. Imlay and our little girl, while I am deprived of a chance of hearing from them.

Adieu, Yours truly,

G. Imlay.

Feb. 19 [1795].

When I first received your letter, putting off your return to an indefinite time, I felt so hurt, that I know not what I wrote. I am now calmer, though it was not the kind of wound over which time has the quickest effect; on the contrary, the more I think, the sadder I grow. Society fatigues me inexpressibly— . . . My child alone interests me, and, but for her, I should not take any pains to recover my health.

As it is, I shall wean her, and try if by that step (to which I feel a repugnance, for it is my only solace) I can get rid of my cough. Physicians talk much of the danger attending any complaint on the lungs, after a woman has suckled for some months. They lay a stress also on the necessity of keeping the mind tranquil—and, my God! how has mine been harassed! But whilst the caprices of other women are gratified, 'the wind of heaven not suffered to visit them too rudely,' I have not found a guardian angel, in heaven or on earth, to ward off sorrow or care from my bosom.

What sacrifices have you not made for a woman you did not respect!—but I will not go over this ground—I want to tell you that I do not understand you. You say that you have not given up all thought of returning here—and I know that it will be necessary—nay, is. I cannot explain myself; but if you have not lost your memory, you will easily divine my meaning. What! is our life then only to be made up of separations? and am I only to return to a country, that has not merely lost all charms for me, but for which I feel a repugnance that almost amounts to horror, only to be left there a prey to it.

Why is it so necessary that I should return? [8]—

[8] There is no evidence in any of the letters that Imlay renewed his former request for Mary to come to London,

brought up here, my girl would be freer. Indeed, expecting you to join us, I had formed some plans of usefulness that have now vanished with my hopes of happiness.

In the bitterness of my heart, I could complain with reason, that I am left here dependent on a man, whose avidity to acquire a fortune has rendered him callous to every sentiment connected with social or affectionate emotions.—With a brute insensibility, he cannot help displaying the pleasure your determination to stay gives him, in spite of the effect it is visible it has on me. . . .

Now follow three letters (the first to Imlay and the next two to Rowan) which she wrote from her house in Havre—'my house' she calls it—while waiting for the 'vessel' on which to cross the Channel. Her trip was delayed, as she tells us, because, on the first embarkation, 'the awkward pilot ran us aground.' It was probably only a few days after Mary's departure that Rowan took advantage of her offer of 'a lodging there while waiting for a passage to America.'

To Imlay:

April 7 [1795].

Here I am at [Havre], on the wing towards you, and I write now, only to tell you, that you may

but there must have been some communication between them, for Godwin gives this account of her return:

In April, 1795, Mary returned once more to London, being requested to do so by Mr. Imlay, who even sent a servant to Paris to wait upon her in the journey, before she could complete the necessary arrangements for her departure. But, notwithstanding these favourable appearances, she came to England with a heavy heart, not daring, after all the uncertainties and anguish she had endured, to trust to the suggestions of hope. (*Memoirs*, p. 123.)

expect me in the course of three or four days; for I shall not attempt to give vent to the different emotions which agitate my heart.—You may term a feeling, which appears to me to be a degree of delicacy that naturally arises from sensibility, pride—Still I cannot indulge the very affectionate tenderness which glows in my bosom, without trembling, till I see, by your eyes, that it is mutual.

I sit, lost in thought, looking at the sea—and tears rush into my eyes, when I find that I am cherishing any fond expectations.—I have indeed been so unhappy this winter, I find it as difficult to acquire fresh hopes, as to regain tranquillity.—Enough of this—lie still, foolish heart!—But for the little girl, I could almost wish that it should cease to beat, to be no more alive to the anguish of disappointment.

Sweet little creature! I deprived myself of my only pleasure, when I weaned her, about ten days ago.—I am however glad I conquered my repugnance.—It was necessary it should be done soon, and I did not wish to embitter the renewal of your acquaintance with her, by putting it off till we met.—It was a painful exertion to me, and I thought it best to throw this inquietude with the rest, into the sack that I would fain throw over my shoulder.—I wished to endure it alone, in short—Yet, after sending her to sleep in the next room for three or four nights, you cannot think with what joy I took her back again to sleep in my bosom!

I suppose I shall find you, when I arrive, for I do not see any necessity for your coming to me.—Pray inform Mr. ——, that I have his little friend with me.—My wishing to oblige him, made me put myself to some inconvenience—and delay my departure; which was irksome to me, who have

not quite as much philosophy, I would not for the world say indifference, as you.

God bless you !

Yours truly

* * * * [9]

Two days later she wrote from the same place to Rowan. The letter was addressed to: 'Mr. J. Thomson.'

My dear Sir,

Going off at an hours notice I have scarcely a moment to command to wish you well and to express my regret that I have not had the pleasure of seeing you again. I have left you a few things in a closet—and believe me it will give me sincere pleasure to see you once more.—Pray let me hear from you—God bless you [!] remember that I want to be number[ed] amongst your friend[s]. I ought to be for I feel that I am sorry to say Adieu and that I shall think of you with affection.

M. Imlay.[1]

Terminal, April 9.

The further letter to Rowan dates itself in the first sentence. It was printed in Rowan's *Autobiography* (Dublin, 1840), page 259, and again in Kegan Paul's *William Godwin* (London, 1876), i. 221, 2. Each version contains one or more passages lacking in the other, and there are a few minor changes. I use Rowan's text, as being the more nearly contemporary and showing the variants in notes, and the text which

[9] *Posthumous Works*, Letters xxiv. to xxxviii. iii. 62-117.

[1] This letter has never before been printed. The original is in the possession of Mr. Frank T. Sabin, 172 New Bond Street, London, W.1, who kindly supplied me with a transcript.

is supplied from Kegan Paul's version, between brackets.

Havre [April 1795.]

My dear Sir,

I wrote a few hasty lines to you just now before we entered the vessel, and after hurrying myself out of breath—for as I do not like exaggerated phrases, I would not say *to death*—the awkward pilot ran us aground; so here we are in an empty house, and with the heart and imagination on the wing, you may suppose that the slow march of time is felt very painfully. I seem to be counting the ticking of a clock; and there is no clock here. For these few days I have been busy preparing; now all is done, and we cannot go. If you were to pop in, I should be glad, for in spite of my impatience to meet a friend who deserves all my tenderness, I have still a corner in my heart where I will allow you a place, *if you have no objection.* It would give me sincere pleasure to meet you at any future period, and to be introduced to your wife. Pray take care of yourself; and when you arrive, let me hear from you. [Direct to me at Mr. Johnson's, St. Paul's Church-yard, London, and wherever I may be the letter will not fail to reach me.] You will not find a very comfortable house; but I have left a little store of provisions in a closet, and the girl who assisted in the kitchen, and who has been well paid, has promised to do everything for you. Mr. Wheatcroft has [all] your packages, and will give you all the information and assistance he can. I believe I told you that I offered Mr. Russell's family my house; but since I arrived I find that there is some chance of letting it. Will you, then, when Mr. Wheatcroft informs you in what manner he has settled it, write the particulars to them. I imagine that the house will be empty for a short

time at any rate, [but I found it necessary to take my linen with me, and the good people have sold my kitchen furniture for me.] Still, I think as they have many necessaries, they will find this house much more comfortable than an inn. Perhaps I may visit your country; if so I shall not forget to tell your wife that I call yourself my friend. I neither like to say or write adieu. If you see my brother Charles, pray assure him that I most affectionately remember him. Take every precaution to avoid danger.

Yours sincerely

MARY IMLAY.

While Mary was crossing the Channel she completed this letter to Imlay, which she probably sent to him from Dover. It is printed at the end of Mary's *Letters written during a Short Residence in Sweden*, etc., 1796.

Dover.

I left this letter unfinished, as I was hurried on board; and now I have only to tell you, that, at the sight of the Dover cliffs, I wondered how any body could term them grand; they appeared so insignificant to me, after those I had seen in Sweden and Norway.

Adieu! My spirit of observation seems to be fled!—and I have been wandering round this dirty place, literally speaking, to kill time; though the thoughts, I would fain fly from, lie too close to my heart to be easily shook off, or even beguiled, by any employment, except that of preparing for my journey to London.—God bless you!

MARY ——.

On her arrival in London, 'the gloomy forebodings of her mind, were but too faithfully verified. Mr.

Imlay had already formed another connection; as it is said, with a young actress from a strolling company of players. His attentions therefore to Mary were formal and constrained.'

Mary grew so desperate that she made her first attempt at suicide at 'the close of May.' But 'her life was, at this time, saved and she determined to continue to exist.' Imlay's business in Norway was then in difficulties and Mary decided 'to make the voyage, and take the business into her own hands.' She thought the journey might improve her health and spirits, and also clung to the hope that successful negotiations might result in a reconciliation.

Mary took with her the following document, authorizing her to act in Imlay's behalf.

> Know all men by these presents, that I, Gilbert Imlay, citizen of the United States of America, at present residing in London, do . . . appoint Mary Imlay, my best friend and wife, to take the sole management . . . of all my affairs and business which I had placed in the hands of Mr. Elias Bachman, negotiant, Gottenburg, or in those of Messrs. Myburg & Co., Copenhagen, desiring that she will manage . . . such concerns . . . as she may deem most wise and prudent. For which this letter shall be a sufficient power, enabling her to receive all the money . . . that may be recovered from Peter Ellyson . . . whenever the issue of the tryal now carrying on, instituted by Mr. Elias Backman, as my agent, for the violation of the trust which I had reposed in his integrity. . . .
>
> Respecting the cargo of goods in the hands of Messrs. Myburg & Co., Mrs. Imlay has only to consult the most experienced persons engaged in the disposition of such articles, and then placing

them at their disposal, act as she may deem right and proper. . . .

Thus, confiding in the talent, zeal, and earnestness of my dearly beloved friend and companion, I submit the management of these affairs entirely and implicitly to her discretion.

Remaining most sincerely and affectionately hers truly. G. IMLAY.

Mary reached Hull, from which port she was to sail, on May 27, and at once sat down and wrote to Imlay:

> We arrived here about an hour ago. I am extremely fatigued with the child, who would not rest quiet with any body but me, during the night—and now we are here in a comfortless, damp room, in a sort of tomb-like house. . . . [Fanny] is playing near me in high spirits. She was so pleased with the noise of the mail-horn, she has been continually imitating it.—Adieu!

Mary had carried with her 'a letter to a physician of this place'; 'his wife is a pretty woman (I can admire, you know, a pretty woman, when I am alone) and he an intelligent and rather interesting man.' With these new found friends Mary drove to her old home of Beverley.

The vessel on which she was to sail was delayed by adverse winds, and it was not until June 21 that they finally set sail, Mary arriving in Gothenburg on the 27th. I shall not burden this account with the details of her journey: her itinerary can be pieced together from her letters to Imlay and from her next and last book, *Letters written . . . in Sweden*. Suffice it to relate here that she left Fanny and Marguerite, the French maid she had brought from Paris, in

Gothenburg, while she travelled as far as Tonsberg and Christiania, returning to Gothenburg about the end of August. Then she travelled to Elsinore and Copenhagen, and wound up at Hamburg before the 25th September, where she dwelt in lodgings in Altona. She sailed from Hamburg and arrived in Dover on the 4th of October. In London more bad news awaited her. She found that Imlay was living in ' a ready-furnished house he had provided for his new mistress.'

VIII

1795–1796

MARY'S ATTEMPTED SUICIDE— *LETTERS WRITTEN DURING A SHORT RESIDENCE IN SWEDEN.* *FINAL PARTING FROM IMLAY.*

It was at this time that Mary again determined to make an end to her accumulated troubles by casting herself into the Thames. Godwin describes this in *Memoirs*. Here is another contemporary account:

> Mrs. Imlay (late Mrs. Wolstonecraft) Authoress of The Rights of Women, married Mr. Imlay, an American, in Paris, & has one Child. Imlay came to England with her & pretended he had been married before, and proposed to Mrs. Imlay to live in the same house with his first wife (who in fact is only his mistress). She was so much affected by this usage, that one day last summer she took a Boat and was rowed to Putney, where going on shore & to the Bridge, she threw herself into the water. Her cloaths buoyed her up and she floated, & was taken up senseless abt. 200 yards from the Bridge, and by proper applications restored to life. Her mind is now calm; she is separated from Imlay, and visits her friends as usual, & does not object to mention her attempt.[1]

[1] *The Farington Diary*, by Joseph Farington, R.A. Edited by James Greig, vol. i. July 13, 1793, to August 24, 1802. London: Hutchinson & Co., 1923.

"*Indeed we are very happy*"

From the original drawing by William Blake

(*cf.* above, pp. 207-13)

Kegan Paul says of Mary's attempt at suicide: 'I do not know how far a great novelist of our day has consciously borrowed the incident, or has adopted it only with the keen insight of genius, but the attempted suicide of Mirah in *Daniel Deronda*, is in its very touching details very like that of Mary Wollstonecraft.'

Imlay sent a physician to her, and at Mrs. Christie's request she removed to their house in Finsbury Square, but soon after 'fixed herself in a lodging in Finsbury-place, where, for some time, she saw scarcely any one by Mrs. Christie.'

In November, and therefore at about this time, Imlay and his paramour departed for a three months' holiday in Paris.

It was probably in Mrs. Christie's house, and later in her own lodging, that Mary altered and added to the letters she had written to Imlay on her northern journey, the result of which was published as *Letters written during a short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark.*

It must have been at about this time that Mary wrote her final letter to Fuseli:

> When I returned from France, I visited you, Sir, but finding myself after my late journey [2] in a very different situation, I vainly imagined you would have called upon me. I simply tell you what I thought, yet I write not, at present, comment on your conduct or expostulate. I have long ceased to expect kindness or affection from any human creature, and would fain tear from my heart its treacherous sympathies. I am alone. The in-

[2] To Scandinavia.

justice, without alluding to hopes blasted in the bud, which I have endured, wounding my bosom, have set my thoughts adrift into an ocean of painful conjectures. I ask impatiently what—and where is truth? I have been treated brutally; but I daily labour to remember that I still have the duty of a mother to fulfil.

I have written you more than I intended.—for I only meant to request you to return my letters I wish to have them, and it must be the same to you. Adieu! MARY.[3]

And Fuseli, of course, with his usual churlishness, refused her request!

Early in 1796 Mary wrote a touching letter to Rowan, now, with Charles, engaged in a calico mill in Wilmington, Delaware. This letter has been printed in Rowan's *Autobiography* (1840) and in Kegan Paul's *William Godwin*, but both versions are more or less incomplete. I was fortunate in receiving a transcript of the original through the kindness of Mr. Frank Sabin, and it now appears for the first time, exactly as written:

London, January 26th [1796].

MY DEAR SIR,

Though I have not heard from you I should have written to you, convinced of your friendship, could I have told you any thing of myself that would have afforded you pleasure—But what can I say to you—I am unhappy—I have been treated with unkindness—and even cruelty, by the person from whom I had every reason to expect affection—I write to you with an agitated hand—I cannot be more explicit—I value your good opinion—and

[3] John Knowles, *Life of Fuseli*.

you know how to feel for me—I looked for something like happiness—happiness! in the discharge of my relative duties—and the heart on which I leaned has pierced mine to the quick—I have not been used well—and I live, but for my child—for am weary of myself—When I am more composed I will write to you again, mean time let me hear from you—and tell me something of Charles—I avoid writing to him, because I hate to explain myself—I still think of settling in France, because I wish to leave my little Girl there—I have been very ill—Have taken some desperate steps—But now I am writing for independence—I wish I had no other evil to complain of than the necessity of providing for myself and child—do not mistake me—Mr. Imlay would be glad to supply all my pecuniary wants; but, unless he returns to me himself I would perish first— Pardon the incoherence of my style. I have put off writing to you from time to time, because I could not write calmly. It would afford me the sincerest satisfaction to hear that you are reunited to your family, for I am your affectionate

and Sincere friend,

MARY IMLAY.

Pray write to me—I will not fail, I was going to say when I have any thing good to tell you.—But for me there is nothing good in store, my heart is broken. adieu! God bless you!—If you can be of any service to the bearer you will oblige me—He is an industrious young man—He was a clerk to Mr. Imlay—and I should think might get into a better situation in America than in England—The state of public affairs here are not in a posture to assuage private sorrow.

I think it best, even though not in chronological order, to place here the last two letters between

Mary and Rowan that need be reproduced in this book.

First—Mary to Rowan (who was still in Wilmington) :

London, September 12th, 1796.

My dear Friend,

I wrote to you some months since, by a private hand ; and though you have never acknowledged the receipt of my letter, which I think a little unkind, in spite of the affectionate remembrances that have reached me through the medium of Mr. Maxwell, I feel an inclination to inform you of the present state of my mind. It is calmer. I have been used ill ; and very wretched has the cruellest of disappointments, that of discovering I was deceived by a person in whom I trusted with all the confidence of the most perfect esteem, made me ; still the consciousness that my conduct—for I governed my thoughts as well as my actions—merited a very different return from [Imlay]. Self-respect seems to promise me that internal satisfaction on which alone true happiness is built. I have sent you my last publication,[4] and I would give you a more circumstantial account of my situation had I time at present, in order to induce

[4] A curious American publication was, undoubtedly, the result of Mary's sending Rowan a copy of her *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*. It is possible that Rowan had something to do with it.

In 1796—the year of the English first edition—there was issued, from a press in Wilmington, Delaware, an edition with this title-page : Letters / written / during a short Residence / in / Sweden, Norway, and Denmark / by / Mary Wollstonecraft. / Printed for, & Sold by / J. Wilson, & J. Johnson, / Booksellers, Wilmington, (Del.) / 1796.

The British Museum authorities were kind enough to compare this American edition with the English one. They believe the subject matter to be identical.

you to be equally explicit with me. I am not apt to forget those I esteem ; and in your fate I shall always take the most lively interest, respecting as I do the qualities of your head and heart. It would afford me the sincerest pleasure to hear that there was a chance of your being re-united to your family ; and I wish with all my heart that my *good luck*, if there be any in store for me, may throw me into the same quarter of the globe, for I am sure I should like, say love, Mrs. Rowan, and delight to see you both in the midst of your babies [they had ten]. Mine grows apace, and prattles away ; she is a motive, as well as a reward, for exertion. I neglected calling on Mr. Maxwell for some time during my residence in the country, and when my mind was in the most perturbed state ; I now hear with pain of his declining health. If, therefore, you should write to me, address me at Mr. Johnson's, the bookseller, No. 72, Saint Paul's Churchyard. The bearer of this, Mr. Cooper,[5] is a very ingenious young man, for whom an intimate friend of mine, Mr. Godwin, has a particular affection. By showing him any attention you would oblige Mr. G. as well as myself ; and I am much mistaken if his countenance does not prejudice you in his favour, for it is the sort of one I like to see on young shoulders.

What do you think of the present state of Europe ? The English seem to have lost the common sense which used to distinguish them.

Adieu. Believe me your affectionate friend,

MARY IMLAY.[6]

And then Rowan to Mary. This letter was written before the news of Mary's tragic death had reached

[5] Thomas Cooper, second cousin and pupil of Godwin ; he became an actor and toured America.

[6] This letter was first printed in Rowan's *Autobiography* (1840).

him. He added a postscript on receipt of this sad information.[7]

Brandywine, near Wilmington, Delaware,
Sept. 15, 1797.

DEAR MADAM.—I rejoice most sincerely that you have such a companion, protector, and friend as I believe him to be, whose name the papers inform me you now bear. I have been much to blame. In the more than two years that I have been in America I have written only thrice to you. You were not happy. I had no right to trouble you with my dark reveries. I was displeased with my past and my present conduct and undecided as to my future; how could I speak comfort to so wounded a mind as your's? Now I may be allowed to croak. You know it was my fashion in Paris. Through my wife's *prudent* conduct she has been permitted to remain in possession of my property, and I have thus become a pensioner of the Irish Government. That I have spent only what was necessary for my subsistence does not satisfy me. Every letter which I receive from Mrs. H. R., though couched in the most affectionate terms, yet shows me that what I called acting from principle was in her idea wild ambition or foolish vanity. A mode has been pointed out to me by which I might possibly rejoin my family, but it is a renunciation of principle. I cannot accede to the proposition. I should be for ever unhappy, and, I think, should disgrace my children even as long as it was remembered that I was their ancestor. As my growling, however, signified little, I set about procuring an independence, and with this view commenced calico printer, &c., on the banks of the Brandywine.

[7] I have already quoted a short passage from this letter in my account of Rowan.

I have connected myself with a good *sans culotte* dyer from Manchester, who had two great faults which forced him to quit that place—he could read and he could speak. I rent the place where we are. Aldred, my partner, has the stone mansion, and I have a most romantic corner built, upon a surface of 18 ft. square, a house in the second stage of civilization, viz. a log house, where Charles, who has a daughter, live and cook, &c., just as you saw in the Rue Mousseaux.

Nov. 17.—This has been lying by me, and the last papers announce a melancholy event—and have you so shortly enjoyed the calm repose I hoped you were in possession of (?). I hope the report is false; if true, let this convey my condolence to Mr. G. ARCHD. HAMILTON ROWAN.

Before tracing Mary's footsteps through the year 1796, it is desirable to examine that last book of hers to appear during her life-time: the *Letters from Sweden*, etc., to which reference has just been made.[8]

I cannot agree with Kegan Paul's statement that this book consists merely of Mary's letters to Imlay 'divested of all that was personal and private.' Undoubtedly she used these letters as a chronological basis and took some passages from them, but her book as a whole is obviously a new creation.

Godwin's theory as to the production and publication date of these letters is as follows:

> . . . The most inapprehensive reader may conceive what was the mental torture she endured, when he considers, that she was twice, within an interval

[8] Letters / Written / During a short Residence / In / Sweden, Norway, and Denmark / By Mary Wollstonecraft. / London: J. Johnson, St. Paul's Church-Yard. / 1796.

of four months, from the end of May to the beginning of October, prompted by it to purposes of suicide. Yet in this period she wrote her Letters from Norway. Shortly after its expiration, she prepared them for the press, and they were published in the close of that year.

I am a little dubious about accepting this date, for the book's earliest notice was in the following February. Of the book itself Godwin writes :

> The narrative of this voyage is now before the world, and perhaps a book of travels that so irresistibly seizes on the heart, never, in any other instance, found its way from the press. The occasional harshness and ruggedness of character, that diversify her Vindication of the Rights of Woman, here totally disappear. If ever there was a book calculated to make a man in love with its author, this appears to me to be the book. She speaks of her sorrows, in a way that fills us with melancholy, and dissolves us in tenderness, at the same time that she displays a genius which commands all our admiration. Affliction has tempered her heart to a softness almost more than human ; and the gentleness of her spirit seems precisely to accord with all the romance of unbounded attachment.

The anonymous author of *A Defence* calls them :

> Letters so replete with correctness of remark, delicacy of feeling, and pathos of expression, that they will cease to exist only with the language in which they are written.

Southey wrote to his friend Joseph Cottle, on March 13, 1797 :

> Have you ever met with Mary Wollstonecraft's Letters from Sweden and Norway ? She has made

me in love with a cold climate, and frost and snow, with a northern moonlight.

William Bates, in his biographical sketches for *The Maclise Portrait Gallery*, says:

> Mary Wollstonecraft has left one book, at least, which ought to give her a permanent place in literature. This is her *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796, 8vo), of which it may safely be said that they contain more soul and feeling than any epistolary work in the language, and more irresistibly make the reader in love with the writer.

Perhaps the secret of this book's charm lies in her method of writing it. She says in the 'Advertisement':

> The writing of travels, or memoirs, has ever been a pleasant employment; for vanity or sensibility always renders it interesting. In writing these desultory letters, I found I could not avoid being continually the first person—'the little hero of each tale.' I tried to correct this fault, if it be one, for they were designed for publication; but in proportion as I arranged my thoughts, my letter, I found, became stiff and affected: I, therefore, determined to let my remarks and reflections flow unrestrained, as I perceived that I could not give a just description of what I saw, but by relating the effect different objects had produced on my mind and feelings, whilst the impression was still fresh.
>
> A person has a right, I have sometimes thought, when amused by a witty or interesting egotist, to talk of himself when he can win our attention by acquiring our affection. Whether I deserve to rank among this privileged number, my readers

alone can judge—and I gave them leave to shut the book, if they do not wish to become better acquainted with me. . . .

The praise of the *Letters* by contemporary reviewers was nearly unanimous. Almost the only exception was the writer of the review in *The Monthly Mirror*, who could see nothing but faults and heresy.

Rather than attempt the difficult task of extracting from a book that is all good, I would merely recommend Mary's letters to lovers of literature. Her descriptions of scenery; her opinions—so amazing in their modernity—on hygiene, freedom of thought, the burdens of conventionality and so forth; her love for her child; her affectionate observation of simple folk and her hatred of 'business men'—are all so winning and so impressive, that the book must be its own advocate. Certainly no finer one could be imagined.

The time of Mary's last parting with Imlay and of the renewal of her acquaintance with Godwin was now very near. On Imlay's return from his stay in Paris they met again on two separate occasions. The first of these was 'when Imlay had been already more than a fortnight in town' (say in February 1796) and Mary unexpectedly happened on him in the Christie house, then 'full of company.'

Her child was with her. She entered, and in a firm manner, immediately led up the child, now near two years of age, to the knees of its father. He retired with Mary into another apartment, and promised to dine with her at her lodging, I believe,

the next day. At this meeting, the next day, he aroused anew all Mary's hopes, by his amiable conduct with her. But it was not to last, and the final encounter took place in April, on her return from Berkshire. They met by accident upon the New Road ; he alighted from his horse, and walked with her for some time ; and the rencounter passed, as she assured me, without producing in her any oppressive emotion.[9]

Godwin tells us that ' the day after this interview (the one in February), she set out upon a visit to the country (' to Berkshire,' adds the second edition), where she spent nearly the whole of the month of March. . . . She was at the house of an old and intimate friend, a lady of the name of Cotton, whose partiality for her was strong and sincere. Mrs. Cotton's near-neighbour was Sir William East,[1] and, from the joint effect of the kindness of her friend, and the hospitable and distinguishing attentions of this respectable family, she derived considerable benefit.'

[9] Kegan Paul, *William Godwin*, i. 286, 7.

[1] Sir William East, first Bart. (1737-8–1819), of Hall Place, Berks., High Sheriff, 1766-7, cr. Baronet June 5, 1766 ; m. 1st June 29, 1763, Hannah, second daughter of Henry Cassamajor, and secondly, July 28, 1768, Miss Jackson, having by his first wife issue. Sir Gilbert, second Bart., Augustus Henry ; Mary, m. 1785, Sir William Clayton, fourth Earl of Marden, and had a second son, Sir George East.

IX

1796–1797

MARY'S MEETING WITH GODWIN AND THEIR MARRIAGE—MARY'S DEATH IN CHILDBIRTH —TRIBUTES.

Kegan Paul fixes the time of Godwin's renewed acquaintance with Mary at a rather early date. He quotes from Godwin's records of the year 1795 an account of this gathering :

> In my little deserted mansion I received, on the 22nd of April, a party of twelve persons, the most of whom good-humouredly invited themselves to dine with me, and for whom I ordered provisions from a neighbouring coffee-house. Among this party were Dr. Parr and his two daughters, Mr. and Mrs. Mackintosh, Mr. Holcroft, Mrs. Wollstonecraft, and Mrs. Inchbald. I was also introduced about this time by Merry, the poet, to a most accomplished and delightful woman, the celebrated Mrs. Robinson.

Kegan Paul remarks that Godwin's Diary records (' in scarce intelligible private notes ') the increasing intimacy with Mary Wollstonecraft, of which more hereafter, and there is some evidence that Godwin,

"Be calm, my child"

From the original drawing by William Blake

(*cf.* above, pp. 207-13)

during this year, might, even at his mature age, have said in reference to her as Proteus said of Julie :

> Thou hast metamorphos'd me,
> Made me neglect my studies, lose my time ;

for the record of work is slender, and there is less evidence of interest in public questions.

The same authority, in his ' Prefatory Memoir,' throws additional light on these early meetings. Speaking of Mary Hays he remarks :

> She was a lady of some literary fame in her own day, which fame she long survived, dying in 1843, aged eighty-three. At her house Mary Wollstonecraft met William Godwin once or twice before she went to Norway, and there they met again when after her separation from Imlay she went once more into society.

Godwin wrote as follows to Miss Hays in answer to her invitation to him to renew the acquaintance :

> [Jan. 1796].
> Tuesday, 11 o'clock.
>
> I will do myself the pleasure of waiting on you on Friday, and shall be happy to meet Mrs. Wollstonecraft, of whom I know not that I ever said a word of harm, and who has frequently amused herself by depreciating me. But I trust you acknowledge in me the reality of a habit upon which I pique myself, that I speak of the qualities of others uninfluenced by personal considerations, and am as prompt to do justice to an enemy as to a friend.

Godwin himself relates their next meeting ; he says : ' It was on the fourteenth of April that I first saw her after her excursion into Berkshire.' He also

tells us that, since her return, she had taken a residence in Cumming-Street, Pentonville, not far from where he dwelt.

Gradually the friendship melted into love, as meeting followed meeting. Godwin has told his own story of that ripening affection. How inaccurate was the gossip current about Mary throughout this year is shown by the following extract from *Farington's Diary*:

> Nov. 11, 1796.—I told Opie it had been reputed that he was going to be married to Mrs. Wolstencraft, but that could not be as she is already married to Mr. Imlay an American. He replied that would not have been an obstacle if he had had any such intention, as Mrs. Wolstencraft had herself informed him that she never was married to Imlay, but lived under his protection as an American to avoid a prison and had a Child by him.

So ended the year 1796 and began the last year of Mary's life. She was officially married to Godwin in Old St. Pancras Church, March 29, Godwin's friend James Marshal, and the clerk of the church, being the only witnesses. This marriage brought a number of letters and comments from friends; some from contemporaries not quite so friendly.

First, Thomas Holcroft:

> April 6, 1797.
>
> From my very heart and soul I give you joy. I think you the most extraordinary married pair in existence. May your happiness be as pure as I firmly persuade myself it must be. I hope and expect to see you both, and very soon. If you show coldness, or refuse me, you will do injustice

to a heart which, since it has really known you, never for a moment felt cold to you.

I cannot be mistaken concerning the woman you have married. It is Mrs. W. Your secrecy a little pains me. It tells me you do not yet know me.[1]

T. Holcroft.

Godwin himself wrote to announce his marriage to Mary Hays:

April 10.

My fair neighbour desires me to announce to you a piece of news, which it is consonant to the regard that she and I entertain for you, you should learn rather from us than from any other quarter. She bids me remind you of the earnest way in which you pressed me to prevail upon her to change her name, and she directs me to add, that it has happened to me, like many other disputants, to be entrapped in my own toils; in short, that we found that there was no way so obvious for her to drop the name of Imlay, as to assume the name of Godwin. Mrs. Godwin—who the devil is that?—will be glad to see you at No. 29, Polygon, Somers Town, whenever you are inclined to favour her with a call.[2]

A letter[3] from 'Anna Letitia Barbauld' to 'Mrs. Beecroft' contains the following sentences:

Hampstead. 17th April, 1797.

. . . I suppose you have seen it in the papers the marriage of Mr. Godwin and Mrs. Imlay alias Miss Woolstonecraft. A very suitable match, but numberless are the squibs that are thrown at Mr.

[1] Kegan Paul, *William Godwin*, i. 240.

[2] *Ibid.* in his 'Prefatory Memoir' to his 1879 book, *Letters*, p. lv.

[3] Recently in the possession of Messrs. Maggs of London.

Godwin on the occasion, and he winces not a little on receiving the usual congratulations. In order to give the connection as little as possible the appearance of such a vulgar and debasing tie as matrimony, the parties have established separate establishments, and the husband only visits his mistress like a lover when each is dressed, rooms in order, &c. And this may possibly last till they have a family, then they will probably join quietly in one menage, like other folks.

He says he submitted to the ceremony in compliance with the prejudices of Mrs. Imlay. Now as it is plain she had them not, at one time at least, the excuse will barely serve. But marriage is so much the dictate of nature, that one may say with little probability of being mistaken to the great despiser of it, ' to this complexion thou must come at last.'

Mrs. Inchbald ' expressed her feelings freely ' :

April 11, 1797.

I most sincerely wish you and Mrs. Godwin joy. But, assured that your joyfulness would obliterate from your memory every trifling engagement, I have entreated another person to supply your place, and perform your office in securing a box on Reynold's night. If I have done wrong, when you next marry, I will act differently.

Joseph Ritson wrote to his nephew, Joseph Frank, of Stockton :

10 June, 1797.

I neither have read, nor have any inclination to read, Godwin's essays ; though I have no doubt that the work has merit. . . . I suppose I might call ' The Enquirer ' an unhappy title, from the author's having already published ' An Enquiry ' ;

perhaps, however, you, who have perused the book, may find the name sufficiently apposite to justify the repetition. It would seem as if one was always to be enquiring, without ever coming to a conclusion.

You have heard, by the way, that he is lately married to Mary (alias Mistress) Wolstonecraft, according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, which he was supposed to hold in the utmost detestation or contempt. His *cara sposa*, it seems, had been deceived by trusting to the honour of philosophy of one hackney author already. . . .[4]

The Milnes-Gaskell MS., already cited, says, of the delay in announcing the marriage:

> Mrs. Procter told me that Godwin concealed his marriage with Mary Wollstonecraft because she was in the receipt of an annuity from 3 people ![5]

Kegan Paul informs us that 'into one plan of Godwin's, which may seem strange, his wife willingly fell. His strong view on the possibility that families may

[4] *The Letters of Joseph Ritson, Esq.*, Edited chiefly from Originals in the possession of his Nephew. To which is prefixed a Memoir of the author by Sir Harris Nicolas, K.C.M.G. In Two Volumes. London: William Pickering. 1833.

[5] Mary's own daughter confirms this curious statement:

> My father narrowly circumscribed both his receipts and disbursements. The maintenance of a family had never been contemplated, and could not at once be provided for. My mother, accustomed to a life of struggle and poverty, was so beloved by her friends, that several, and Mr. Johnson in particular, had stood between her and any of the annoyances and mortifications of debt. But this must cease when she married. . . . (Letter quoted by Kegan Paul, *William Godwin*, i. 239.)

weary of the society of their different members, led him to take rooms in a house in Evesham Place, about twenty doors from that in the Polygon, Somers Town, which was their joint home.' The same MS. cited immediately above remarks on this arrangement :

'The party who lives in the other house, God[n] of his wife.'

While Mary was living in this pseudo-single state she wrote these two notes to her new friend Mrs. Reveley, whose son Henry was one of Fanny's playmates :

DEAR MADAM,

Little Eliza has been here two or three hours ; and appears so horrified at not seeing her playmates, that I send to remind you of your promise. The boy is so fine it would be a pity to deprive them of the expected pleasure ; nay, we hope to see Henry return with the messenger, though you should have chanced to misunderstand me.[6]

Little Fanny would be very glad to have the promised Rake, in the course of a day or two, because she wishes to make Hay in the fields opposite to her house. If Henry will bring it she shall like to have a tumble with him on the Hay. The Pitchfork has been used every day.

Fanny sends her love to Henry, and wishes him to direct his next letter to herself, and she will put it up with her books, in her own closet.

[6] This note is now printed for the first time. The original was inserted by Frederick Locker-Lampson in his copy of *Mary : A Fiction*. Locker-Lampson has written in ink on the fly-leaf to which this note is attached : 'The autograph of Mary Wollstonecraft, probably addressed to Mrs. Reveley, in the early days of their acquaintance. Mrs. R.'s boy was certainly called Henry.'

Mama hopes to see Mrs. Reveley on Saturday (half after four) if not before. She sent a note yesterday by the Post.

Polygon, Wednesday morning.[7]

It is here permissible to give a few extracts from Mary's letters to Godwin from the beginning of the year up to her tragic death.

Jan. 5, 1797. Thursday morning.

I was very glad that you were not with me last night, for I could not rouse myself. To say the truth, I was unwell and out of spirits; I am better to-day.

I shall take a walk before dinner, and expect to see you this evening, *chez moi*, about eight, if you have no objection.

Jan 12, 1797. Thursday morning.

I am better this morning, but it snows so incessantly, that I do not know how I shall be able to keep my appointment this evening. What say you? But you have no petticoats to dangle in the snow. Poor women—how they are beset with plagues—within and without.

Feb. 3, 1797. Friday morning.

Mrs. Inchbald was gone into the City to dinner, so I had to measure back my steps.

Today I find myself better, and, as the weather is fine, mean to call on Dr. Fordyce. . . . I believe I feel affectionate to you in proportion as I am in spirits; still I must not dally with you, when I can do anything else. There is a civil speech for you to chew.

[7] This note, also, is now first printed. The original is in the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Collection, San Marino, California.

Feb. 20, 1797.

Everina's cold is so bad, that unless pique argues her, she will not go out to-day. For to-morrow, I think I may venture no promise. . . .

. . . Will you send the second volume of 'Caleb,'[8] and pray *lend* me a bit of India rubber. I have lost mine. . . . You will not forget we are to dine at four. I wish to be exact, because I have promised to let Mary go and assist her brother this afternoon. I have been tormented all this morning by puss, who has had four or five fits. I could not conceive what occasioned them, and took care that she should not be terrified. But she flew up my chimney, and was so wild, that I thought it right to have her drowned. Fanny imagines she was sick, and ran away.

Mar. 11th, 1797. Saturday morning.

I must dine to-day with Mrs. Christie, and mean to return as early as I can; they seldom dine before five.

Should you call and find only books, have a little patience, and I shall be with you.

Do not give Fanny a cake to-day. I am afraid she staid too long with you yesterday.

You are to dine with me on Monday, remember; the salt beef awaits your pleasure.

Saturday, April 8, 1797.

I have just thought it would be very pretty in you to call on Johnson to-day. It would spare me some awkwardness, and please him; and I want you to visit him often of a Tuesday. This is quite disinterested, as I shall never be of the party. Do, you would oblige me. But when I press anything, it is always with a true wifish submission to your judgment and inclination. Remember to leave the key of No. 25 with us, on account of the wine.

[8] *Things as They Are: or, Caleb Williams*, 3 vols. 1794.

April 11th, 1797.

I wish you would desire Mr. Marshal to call on me. Mr. Johnson or somebody else has always taken the disagreeable business of settling with tradesmen off my hands. I am perhaps as unfit as yourself to do it, and my time appears to me as valuable as that of other persons accustomed to employ themselves. Things of this kind are easily settled with money I know; but I am tormented by the want of money, and feel, to say the truth, as if I was not treated with respect, owing to your desire not to be disturbed.

April 20th [1797].

I am pained by the recollection of our conversation last night. The sole principle of conduct of which I am conscious in my behaviour to you, has been in everything to study your happiness. I found a wounded heart, and as that heart cast itself on me, it was my ambition to heal it. Do not let me be wholly disappointed.

Let me have the relief of seeing you this morning. If I do not call before you go out, call on me.

April 20th [1797].

Fanny is delighted with the thought of dining with you. But I wish you to eat your meat first, and let her come up with the pudding. I shall probably knock at your door on my way to Opie's; [9] but should I not find you, let me request you not to be late this evening. Do not give Fanny butter with her pudding.

Saturday morning, May 21st, 1797.

. . . Montague called on me this morning, that is breakfasted with me, and invited me to go with him and the Wedgwoods into the country to-morrow, and return the next day. As I love the country,

[9] She was then sitting to Opie for her portrait.

and think with a poor mad woman I knew, that there is God, or something very consolatory in the air, I should without hesitation have accepted the invitation but for my engagement with your sister. To her even I should have made an apology, could I have seen her, or rather have stated that the circumstances would not occur again. As it is I am afraid of wounding her feelings, because an engagement often becomes important in proportion as it has been anticipated. I began to write to ask your opinion regarding the propriety of sending to her, and feel as I write that I had better conquer my desire of contemplating unsophisticated nature than give her a moment's pain.

MARY.[1]

It is interesting to observe the calm, unimpassioned tone, in which all these notes are written. There are here none of the constant outbursts of love and longing that occur so frequently in her letters to Imlay. Mary's affection for Godwin was true and loyal, but there was no ardent warmth in it, for Godwin was not the kind of person to inspire such a feeling.

On the third of June, Godwin and his friend Basil Montagu set off on a walking tour which lasted until nearly the end of the month. This protracted absence roused Mary's indignation.

Mary wrote to her husband while he was away :

Saturday, half after one o'clock.

. . . I have little to tell you of myself. I am very well. Mrs. Reveley drank tea with me one morning, and I spent a day with her, which would have been a very pleasant one, had I not been a little too much fatigued by a previous visit to Mr. Barry. Fanny often talks of you, and made Mrs. Reveley laugh by

[1] Kegan Paul, *William Godwin*, i. pp. 241-6.

telling her, when she could not find the monkey to show it to Henry, 'that it was gone into the country.' I suppose that Everina would assume some airs at seeing you. She has very mistaken notions of dignity of character. . . .

June 19, Monday almost 12 o'clock.

One of the pleasures you tell me that you promised yourself from your journey was the effect your absence might produce on me. Certainly at first my affection was increased, or rather was more alive. But now it is just the contrary. Your later letters might have been addressed to anybody, and will serve to remind you where you have been, though they resemble nothing less than mementos of affection.

I wrote to you at Dr. Parr's; you take no notice of my letter. Previous to your departure, I requested you not to torment my by leaving the day of your return undecided. But whatever tenderness you took away with you seems to have evaporated on the journey, and new objects, and the homage of vulgar minds restored you to your icy philosophy. . . . In short, your being so late to-night, and the chance of your not coming, shows so little consideration, that unless you suppose me to be a stick or a stone, you must have forgot to think, since you have been on the wing. . . .

And thus, after he had returned and called on her once:

June 25, 1797.

I know that you do not like me to go to Holcroft's. I think you right in principle, but a little wrong in the present application.

When I lived alone, I always dined on a Sunday with company, in the evening, if not at dinner, at St. P[aul's with Mr. Johnson], generally also of a Tuesday, and some other day at Fuseli's.

I like to see new faces as a study, and since my return from Norway, or rather since I have accepted of invitations, I have dined every third Sunday at Twiss's, nay oftener, for they sent for me when they had any extraordinary company. I was glad to go, because my lodging was noisy of a Sunday, and Mr. S.'s house and spirits were so altered, that my visits depressed him, instead of exhilarating me.

I am then, you perceive, thrown out of my track, and have not traced another. But so far from wishing to intrude on yours, I had written to Mrs. Jackson, and mentioned Sunday, and am now sorry that I did not fix on to-day as one of the days for sitting for my picture.

To Mr. Johnson I would go without ceremony, but it is not convenient for me at present to make haphazard visits.

Should Carlisle[2] chance to call on you this morning, send him to me; but by himself, for he often has a companion with him, which would defeat my purpose.

And a few days later:

Sunday morning, July 3rd, 1797.

Mrs. Reveley can have no doubt about to-day, so we are to stay at home. I have a design upon you this evening to keep you quite to myself—I hope nobody will call!—and make you read the play.

I was thinking of a favourite song of my poor friend Fanny's: 'In a vacant rainy day, you shall be wholly mine,' etc.

Unless the weather prevents you from taking your accustomed walk, call on me this morning, for I have something to say to you.

[2] Dr. Anthony Carlisle (1780-1840) afterward 'Sir Anthony.' He unfortunately arrived, of his own volition, too late to save Mary's life.

The news that she had for Godwin was clearly that once again a child was quick within her. Kegan Paul says Mary 'had a strong opinion that in all normal and natural cases (of childbearing) women were the proper persons to attend their own sex.' She therefore engaged Mrs. Blenkinsop, matron and midwife to the Westminster Lying-in Hospital, to be with her. When Mrs. Blenkinsop arrived, soon after Mary Godwin was taken in labour on Wednesday, August 30, all seemed well. She had wished that Godwin should not be in the house, but she wrote him notes during her labour that can have but few parallels.

Aug. 30, 1797.

I have no doubt of seeing the animal to-day; but must wait for Mrs. Blenkinsop to guess at the hour. I have sent for her. Pray send me the newspaper. I wish I had a novel or some book of sheer amusement to excite curiosity and while away the time. Have you anything of the kind?

August 30, 1797.

Mrs. Blenkinsop tells me everything is in a fair way, and that there is no fear of the event being put off till another day. Still at present she thinks I shall not immediately be freed from my load. I am very well. Call before dinner time, unless you receive another message from me.

Three o'clock. Aug. 30, 1797.

Mrs. Blenkinsop tells me I am in the most natural state, and can promise me a safe delivery, but that I must have a little patience.[3]

Those are the last lines that this wonderful lady ever wrote. Godwin has recorded in only too much

[3] Kegan Paul, *William Godwin*, i. 272

detail the terrible sufferings through which she passed. The end, with all its pain, was not long delayed.

Mrs. Inchbald reported Mary's death to Mrs. Phillips in these words :

> She was attended by a woman, whether from partiality or economy I cant tell—from no affected prudery I am sure. She had a very bad time, and they at last send for an intimate friend of *his*, Mr. Carlisle, a man of talents. He delivered her, and told her he had saved her life : he left her for two hours—returned, and pronounced she must die. Still she languished three or four days. This is the account I have heard, but not from *him* ; he has written to me several times but they are more like distracted lines than any thing rational.[4]

According to a note in the Milnes-Gaskell MS., Basil Montagu, step-father of the Mrs. Procter already mentioned,

> brought Dr. A. Carlisle who prescribed a soothing draught—'I feel in heaven' said Mrs. Godwin to her husband who entered the room : 'I suppose, my dear, that that is a form for saying you are in less pain.'—'He deserved to be kicked,' said Mrs. Procter.

Kegan Paul's comment on this tragic death is worthy and dignified :

> She died in her prime, intellectual and physical, leaving to the daughter to whom she then gave birth a mingled inheritance of genius and sadness, of

[4] *Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald*, ii. 14.

filial duty met by coldness at home, of deep wedded joys, and deep wedded sorrows. Her opinions have become in many particulars the commonplaces of our own day, while she who was the first to proclaim what is now held innocently was forgotten or assailed.

Mary [Wollstonecraft] was buried where she had been married, at old St. Pancras. This was then a quiet, almost a country churchyard, with its pretty Norman church embowered in trees. A long weeping willow shadowed the grave itself.

The funeral took place in Old St. Pancras Churchyard, attended by all the friends, save Mr. Tuthil, who had been on terms of great intimacy with Godwin and his wife. . . .

Old St. Pancras churchyard has seen strange vicissitudes. The [Metropolitan and] Midland Railway broke in on its peace; and when I visited it some years ago to search for Mary Wollstonecraft's grave, I thought I had seldom seen a place of the dead so desecrated. Once more the wilderness blossoms as the rose; it has become a public garden, well tended and fair.

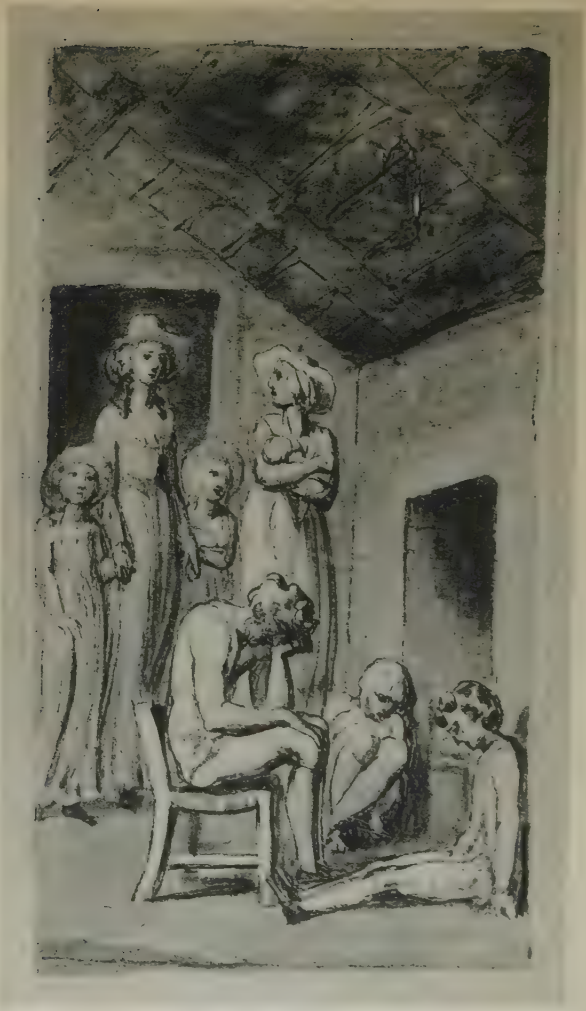
But neither in its shame nor its reparation did Mary Wollstonecraft lie there. When the railway invaded the spot, and Godwin had lain some years by his wife's side, their grandson, Sir Percy [Florence] Shelley, removed their remains to Bournemouth churchyard to the grave where he had laid his mother. [Mary Shelley died in 1851, and it was in the same year that this removal was made.] There, on a sunny bank sloping to the west, among the rose-wreathed crosses of many who have died in more orthodox beliefs, lie those who at least might each of them have said:

Write me as one who loves his fellow-men.

Mary passed to her rest, not to be disturbed by the

chorus of vituperation which has assailed her memory.

Thee nor carketh care nor slander
Nothing but the small cold worm
Fretteth thine enshrouded form—
Let them rave.
Light and shadow ever wander
O'er the green that folds thy grave—
Let them rave.



"Economy and self-denial are necessary in every station to enable us to be generous"

From the original drawing by William Blake

(*cf.* above, pp. 207-14)

X

PORTRAITS OF MARY.

Of Mary's actual face but two representations remain to us. One is Opie's lovely portrait (reproduced as frontispiece to this book), for which Mary sat in April 1797, and which is hung in the National Portrait Gallery, London; the other, a cast of her face, made after death.

A second portrait attributed to Opie, and often wrongly said to be of Mary, hangs also in the National Portrait Gallery. This picture was first engraved 'by Ridley after a painting by Opie,' to precede an entirely unauthorized article (which Johnson had vainly striven to suppress), entitled Mrs. Wollstonecroft, in the second number of *The Monthly Mirror*, January 1796 (1 : 131-3).[1]

[1] This article devotes more space to Johnson's refusal to furnish a biographical sketch than to its subject. However, even if unauthorized, its comments on Mary are pleasant ones; this is all they said:

> We could compliment her . . . with the utmost sincerity, on the vast additions she has made to the literature of the present age in general, and to the exaltation of the female character in particular. We could compliment her on the strength and vigour of her intellect, the force of her reasoning, the variety of her arguments, and the bold delivery of her sentiments. We could compliment her on being, what she is, the Champion of the Rights of Her Sex, and on her endeavours to expunge from the catalogue

In *The Magazine of Art*, London, December 1899 (24 : 82) appears an article from which the following may be quoted :

> Under the will of the late Lady Shelley, our national collection of portraits has been enriched by four likenesses, which are of the greatest interest to all students of Shelley.
>
> Miss Amelia Curran's portrait of Shelley, Rome, 1841.
>
> Mary W. Shelley, by R. Rothwell, 1841.
>
> William Godwin, by Jas. Northcote, R.A.
>
> Mary W. Godwin, painted by John Opie, R.A., about the year 1797.
>
> The other portrait [of 'Mary W. Godwin'], transferred from the National Gallery in 1899 to the

of modern affectation such nonsensical cant as 'susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste,' and other pretty feminine phrases, which the men condescendingly use to soften the slavish independence [*Vide* Introduction to *The Rights of Woman*, pp. 6, 7, slightly altered to fit the context] of her sex; and which, it might have been added, half the female *fashionable* world have adopted as the substitute for *real* feeling and *genuine* benevolence.

It is almost unnecessary to add, that Mrs. Wollstonecraft is the author of the celebrated *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*; and of an Historical and *Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution*. Another work in the press [*Letters . . . in Sweden*, which the *Mirror*, as agreed, reviewed in its number for March 1796—1 : 285-9—a bitter review throughout, without a kind word for this delightful book] will be reviewed, immediately on publication, with the same candour which, we flatter ourselves, have hitherto distinguished the critical disquisitions of the *Monthly Mirror*. In the meantime we have to inform our readers that a biographical sketch of Mrs. Wollstonecroft, from the most authentic materials, will shortly be given to the world through the medium of this Miscellany.

Unfortunately the promised 'biographical sketch' never made its appearance.

National Portrait Gallery, was purchased by the National Gallery in 1884 at the sale of W. Russell's pictures, and was hung January 1885. Kegan Paul wrote in *The Times* impugning its authenticity. Sir F. Burton replied in *The Times* of January 7, 1885, that the portraits were alike, that the lady was about forty years in the spurious picture and twenty-five in the one painted by Opie for Godwin.

This point of dispute is not, however, cleared up, for the picture just bequeathed by Lady Shelley is officially described as being painted 'about 1797' the year of Mrs. Godwin's death, and when she was thirty-eight years of age. The recently added portrait is undoubtedly a good example of Opie's art and a dignified representation of the intellectual authoress of the *Rights of Woman*.

What has Kegan Paul to say about this dispute? His own books are liberally illustrated. In *William Godwin* (1876) he gives us Northcote's portrait of Godwin, and Opie's true one of Mary. In *Mary Wollstonecraft* (1879) there are two portraits of Mary—the true and the spurious. Kegan Paul remarks:

A word is necessary in reference to some of the difficulties which they present.

The portrait etched for the frontispiece is beyond all doubt that painted by Opie for Godwin during the few months of his marriage with Mary Wollstonecraft, and very shortly before her death. . . . The hair in this picture is a bright auburn, and corresponds in colour with that cut from Mary Wollstonecraft's head after death. A considerable quantity of this hair is also in Sir Percy Shelley's keeping. The features of the portrait correspond in every degree with a cast taken from the face after death, and show that the likeness must have

been as striking as the painting is excellent. It was engraved, as by Opie, by Heath in 1798, and was published by Johnson, Mary's publisher and intimate friend.

The second portrait is in the possession of Mr. William Russell, and was sold to him twenty years since as by Northcote, but was immediately pronounced by him to be by Opie, a fact now certain.

Is it Mary Wollstonecraft?

The face is older, though the likeness to the other picture is strong. The hair is grey or powdered, the first being impossible in Mary's case, the second unlikely. But it was engraved, as by Opie, by Ridley, and published by Bellamy for the proprietors of the *Monthly Mirror* in 1796, with the name of 'Mrs. Wollstonecraft,' that is to say in Mary Wollstonecraft's lifetime, and it does not seem that any doubt was thrown upon it. It is, however, clear from an article in the *Monthly Mirror* that the plate was issued without authority.

There is here a difficulty which is to me quite insoluble and I can only leave the puzzle as I find it, saying simply that the authenticity of the first portrait is obviously indisputable, while it is not easy to dispute that of the second.

Elizabeth Robins Pennell, in her *Life of Mary Wollstonecraft*, remarks of this portrait:

> It was engraved and published in the *Monthly Mirror* with Mary's name attached to it, during her lifetime. When Mr. Kegan Paul published the *Letters to Imlay* in 1879, there seemed no doubt of its authenticity. But since then it has been proved to be the portrait of the wife of an artist who lived in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

To what extent can these opinions be controverted or supplemented? Let us consider the actual facts.

This painting was done in 1795. But Opie, like Holcroft, James Marshal, Mrs. Reveley, and probably Mrs. Siddons, was first an acquaintance of Godwin before ever he met Mary, and he first made Godwin's acquaintance in 1795. Wherefore he could hardly have painted Mary before 1796, and the portrait in question is definitely of the year preceding this.

Apart from date, the hair in the picture suggests that it is spurious. As Kegan Paul says, grey hair is ' impossible ' and powder ' unlikely.' Mary's ' bright auburn ' hair was one of her most attractive charms, and even Opie's portrait, painted after ' all the waves and storms of her sorrows had gone over her,' shows not one single grey hair.

What is the explanation of the painting's rumoured connection with Mary? Surely this simple one: Under no circumstances would the portrait ever have been assigned to Mary, had it not appeared in the *Monthly Mirror* with her name to it. Here is a magazine beginning its career, printing its first number in December 1795, and very much on the look-out for something attractive to build up its circulation. Perhaps a ' write-up ' of Mrs. Wollstonecraft seemed likely copy. Johnson is applied to for a portrait and biographical particulars. He refuses, saying: ' The highest compliment you can pay Mrs. Wollstonecraft would be that of saying nothing about her.' Now picture the paper's emissary, having failed in his mission and not wanting to return empty-handed. Would he not likely stop at some painter's studio, or art-dealer's shop, and select the picture of the ' wife of an artist ' as having perhaps a

certain resemblance to Mary? His employers accept his story and his picture, and engage Ridley to engrave it.

These notes shall conclude with two letters concerning Mary, both hitherto unprinted. The first from James Marshal (one of the two witnesses at the marriage of Mary and Godwin), to William Hazlitt, showing that these two friends still retained their interest in our heroine nearly a quarter of a century after her death.

21 July, 1821.

Dear Sir,

I went up to your country retreat last evening but had not the good fortune to find you there. It was simply to communicate a short conversation, which passed between Mr. Godwin and me over our tea an hour or so before.

Over the mantelpiece of his study is a portrait of his first wife, and, pointing to it, I said, 'I was told a few days ago, that Stodart formerly wrote a sonnet on that lady.'—'Who is Stodart?'—'Dr. Slop: is it true?' 'Not that I know of, I never read or heard of such a thing: but a sonnet by Stodart, had I read it, would have been forgotten by me as soon as read.'—'I was told also, that he eagerly sought her society.' 'That I do not believe either. There were only two persons besides myself, who were desirous of paying her particular attention, and Stodart was not one of them.' 'His acquaintance with you was prior, I think, to his acquaintance with her?'—'Certainly; and at the period when he introduced himself to me, he was wild in the defence of principles, the very reverse of what he now upholds. It was when I lived in Charlton Street, Somers Town. The history of our

acquaintance is this. He was in the habit of calling upon me in a morning, and as I was then making court to the lady in question, who was frequently with me, his visits became annoying, and I treated him so unceremoniously, that he at length ceased to call, and I have scarcely seen him a dozen times since.'—'He never used, I think, to be among either your or her visitors, after your marriage, when you lived in the Polygon?'—'No, never.'

This is all that passed, and all, probably that belongs to Dr. Slop's intimacy with Mary Wollstonecraft. If a sonnet were ever written by him, the best course of enquiry respecting it, I am persuaded, would be that which I pointed out to you on Thursday, of Mary Hayes (*sic*). I need not say, I am sure, that the whole of this communication is strictly *entre nous*.

Yours, Dear sir, truly,
JAS: MARSHAL.[2]

The second letter is one that Godwin wrote to his daughter's publisher—Charles Ollier—and owes its interest not only to its references to both his daughter and to her mother; but also because it seems to indicate that Mary was a poet as well as a writer of prose. The only other reference to this practice is her juvenile memory of 'making little songs addressed to angels.'

Palace Yard.
April 3, 1835.

MY DEAR SIR,

I was favoured with a note from you more than a week ago, in which you say that you will send me in a day or two a copy of Mrs. Shelley's *Lodore*.

[2] The original of this letter is a recent acquisition by the Department of Manuscripts, British Museum (Add. MS. 40856).

This you have not yet done, though I perceive you have sent copies to the Athenaeum and the Literary Gazette.

I remember perfectly my promise to you of a scrap of my wife's first writing. Will you allow the inclosed as an acquittal of my promise? Nearly forty years have elapsed since her death. And, as I have changed my place of abode five times in that interval, I had some difficulty in laying my hands on any thing to acquit my promise. It has not, as you seemed to wish, her signature, and I know nothing of the history of the stanzas.[3] May I entreat you to be contented, with the assurance that they are certainly in her own handwriting?

Begging you to excuse this imperfect performance, I beg to subscribe myself,

Yours very faithfully and sincerely,

WILLIAM GODWIN.

[3] Unfortunately the 'stanzas' did not accompany this letter in its final arrival at the Ford Collection in the New York Public Library.

END OF THE SUPPLEMENT.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The following are the bibliographical details of the first and more interesting subsequent editions of Godwin's 'Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft,' together with a selection from contemporary reviews.

1798 (1st Edition)

MEMOIRS / OF THE / AUTHOR / OF A / VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN. / (printer's line*) / By William Godwin. / (printer's line*) / London / Printed for J. Johnson, No. 72, St. Paul's / Church-Yard; and G. G. and J. Robinson, / Paternoster-Row. / 1798.

1 vol. $4\frac{1}{8} \times 6\frac{3}{4}$ inches (uncut copy).

Collation. Pp. iv plus 204: (i) (ii) half-title, Memoirs. verso blank; (iii) (iv) title-page, verso blank; (1)-199 text (B to O_7 in sixteens); (200) blank; (201) (202) Errata, and Directions to the Binder. verso blank; (203) (204) Johnson's Catalogue: Written by Mrs. Wollstonecraft Godwin. Nine titles; Necker and Letters . . . in Sweden not included.

Illustration. Frontispiece, facing title-page, engraved portrait: Opie pinx^{t} Heath sculp^{t} / Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin. / London. Published Jan. 1st 1798, by J. Johnson, S^{t} Pauls Church Yard.

Original price and binding. 3s. 6d. in boards.

1798 (2nd Edition)

London. The Second Edition, Corrected. / London: / Printed for J. Johnson, No. 72, St. Paul's / Church-Yard. / 1798. 206 pp. of text.

Subsequent Editions (1799-1912)

Schnepfenthal. DENKSCHRIFT AUF MARIA WOLLSTONECRAFT GODWIN, die Vertheidigerin der Rechte des Weibes, von William Godwin. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt und mit einigen Anmerkungen begleitet. Nebst dem Bildnisse der Verstorbenen. Schnepfenthal, im Verlage der Buchhandlung der Erziehungsanstalt. 1799.

This was translated and published by C. G. Salzmann, who also wrote the preface.

Philadelphia. MEMOIRS / OF / MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT GODWIN, / Author / of / "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman." / Philadelphia: / Printed by James Carey, / No. 16, Chesnut-street. / 1799.

Paris. VIE / ET MEMOIRES / DE MARIE WOLLSTONECRAFT GODWIN, / Auteur de la Défense des droits / de la Femme, d'une Réponse / à Edmond Burck, des Pensées / sur l'Education ses Filles. / Traduit de l'Anglais, / Par le Citoyen D*****n. / (printer's line) / A Paris, / Chez / Testu, Imprimeur-Libraire, rue Hautefeuille, nº. 14; / Fuchs, Libraire, rue des Mathurins, hotel de Cluny; / Desenne, Libraire, palais du Tribunat; / Le Prieur, Libraire, rue Saint Jacques; / Petit, Libraire, palais du Tribunat, galere vitée, nº. 229, près de Théatre. / (printer's line) / AN X. 1802.

The British Museum copy of this book is bound in paper and contains no portrait.

There is a Preface by the translator, discussing various points in the Memories, and justifying their translation for the French public by reference to Mary's wonderful personality and the interest the Memories should command in consequence.]

Philadelphia. MEMOIRS / OF / M. WOLLSTONE-CRAFT GODWIN, / Author / of / A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. / (double printer's line) / Philadelphia : / Printed by Samuel Akerman, No. 159, / Race-street. / 1804.

Halle a. G. WILLIAM GODWIN. / Erinnerungen an Mary Wollstonecraft / Übersetzt von / Therese Schlesinger-Eckstein / Verlag von Edgar Thamm, Halle a. G. / 1912.

GODWIN'S *MEMOIRS*: CONTEMPORARY REVIEWS

The Analytical Review, March 1798 (27 : 235-40).

. . . The narrative is easy, and we believe very faithful and true, so far it is entitled to praise. But it is obvious, that Mrs. G. entertained singular opinions, and reduced them into practice. This circumstance will invite many severely to criticise, and some to censure her character. As this is the case, we think it was due to Mrs. G. to have stated *how* those opinions were formed and the *reasons* by which she supported them.

It is indeed a bold narrative of the life of a woman, very eventful and touching. We think it entitled to very limited praise. In another respect it is deficient. It gives no correct history of the formation of Mrs. G.'s mind. We are neither informed of her favourite books, her hours of study, nor her attainments in languages and philosophy. She contemplated nature with rapture we are told, and enjoyed much of its inspiration. Of this there can be no

doubt ; but as the chief use of biography is to teach us to attain to eminence in virtue and knowledge, we think too *little* is told us concerning the subjects of Mrs. G.'s study, and her manner of studying : but, perhaps, instead of censuring, we ought to lament the paucity of the means of information.

We conceive exceptions will be taken to her conduct in three respects ; and we think too little attention is given to such probable exceptions in the narrative.

1st, Mrs. G.'s notions and practice respecting marriage will meet violent objections. . . .

The next charge we expect to hear advanced against the character of Mrs. G. is the versatility of her attachments. It will be said, to-day she loves Mr. Fuseli, to-morrow attaches herself to Mr. Imlay, and, the moment Imlay finally abandons her, we find her in the arms of Mr. Godwin.

But what is there in all this? those, who feel powerfully one impression, are, no doubt, the most easily susceptible of another.

Rouchefoucauld, in his maxims . . . asserts that the heart, which is torn by a disappointed affection, is the best prepared to form a new one. *But did Mrs. G. ever renounce an attachment?* He who reads her letters will declare, that the possibility of such a conduct did not exist in her nature. Her love was more lasting than its object.

Her attachment to Mr. Fuseli was conceived against her wishes and efforts. It grew into no connection. She travelled to banish his image, and no better expedient remains to her who would discard one recollection, than the assiduous cultivation of another. The only question in the case is, whether she abandoned Imlay too soon, who had abandoned her for many months. . . . He who reads her letters will stand astonished at the fervour, strength and duration of her affection for Imlay. At the bar of reason, in this respect, Mrs. G. is more than exculpated. . . .

A head of Mrs. G. is prefixed to these memoirs, which exhibits at once a striking likeness and a very interesting figure. We think every one who reads these memoirs ought, in justice to Mrs. G. to read her letters ; and we wish, indeed, that they had not been separately printed.

Imperfect as these memoirs are, we have no fellowship with him, who can read them without a tear.

Y. S.

The Monthly Mirror, March 1798 (5 : 153, 4).

The first of these productions [*Memoirs* and *Posthumous Works*] begins with the life of the celebrated author, written by her husband, Mr. Godwin, who, venerating no doubt, the amiable virtues and eminent talents of Mrs. G. has thought fit to give this volume to the world, compiled principally from written memorandums and careful inquiries, respecting the remarkable incidents of her life. It must be confessed, that this morsel of biography does not teem with much variety of anecdote or dignity of sentiment. It we take out the account of her intimacy with Mr. Imlay, there is little to interest the feelings : her labour and the circumstances attending her death, are too minutely described : not to say, that, in many places, there is a frequent repetition of the same occurrences : this gives that sort of *ennui*, which, to the generality of readers, must render its perusal very desultory and insipid. . . .

Upon the whole, the life of Mrs. Godwin leaves no very considerable impression upon our feelings : had it pleased heaven to prolong her days, and extend her labours, the world, by and by, might probably have been in possession of facts which would have redounded more to the celebrity of her name : we should not then have merely read an account of *moving from this place to that*, which at present occupies nearly one half of the volume : but should have

discovered her ardent and vigorous mind busied every day in fresh pursuits for the amelioration of mankind.

The European Magazine, April 1798 (33 : 246-51).

The Lady whose memoirs are now before us appears to have possessed good abilities and originally a good disposition; but, with an overweening conceit of herself, much obstinacy and self will, and a disposition to run counter to established practices and opinions. Her conduct in the early part of her life was blameless, if not exemplary; but the latter part of it blemished with actions which must consign her name to posterity (in spite of all palliatives) as one whose example, if followed, would be attended by the most pernicious consequences to society; a philosophical wanton, breaking down the bars intended to restrain licentiousness; and a mother, deserting her helpless offspring, disgracefully brought into the world by herself, by an intended act of suicide. [This strikes the key-note of the whole review; the reviewer proceeds to quote Godwin's account of her meeting Dr. Price, and that in 1787 she became an infrequent church attendant.] At the time above ascertained commenced those eccentricities in Mrs. Godwin's conduct which stained the latter part of her life with ignominy. A female unrestrained by the obligations of religion, is soon ripe for licentious indecorums. . . . She then . . . accepted the office of Governess to the daughters of Lord Viscount Kingsborough . . . and wonders are told of the salutary effects of her system of education; but when we reflect on what Mr. Godwin is silent about, the misconduct of one of her pupils, who has lately brought disgrace on herself, death on her paramour, risk to the lives of her brother and father, and misery to all her relatives; when we consider also Mrs. Godwin's own subsequent conduct; we hesitate in giving implicit credit to the eulogium. . . .

She died the 10th of September, and her husband

boasts that during her whole illness not one word of a religious cast fell from her lips. Rare philosophy! Such was the catastrophe of a female philosopher of the new order; such the events of her life; and such the apology for her conduct. It will be read with disgust by every female who has any pretensions to delicacy; with detestation by every one attached to the interests of religion and morality; and with indignation by any one who might feel any regard for the unhappy woman, whose frailties should have been buried in oblivion. Licentious as the times are, we trust it will obtain no imitators of the heroine in this country. It may act, however, as a warning to those who fancy themselves at liberty to dispense with the laws of propriety and decency, and who suppose the possession of perverted talents will atone for deviations from rules long established for the well government of society, and the happiness of mankind.

The Critical Review, April 1798 (22 : 414-19).

It will be readily conceded by every person who has perused Mrs. Godwin's writings with attention and candour, that she was not only possessed of great genius, which directed her to original habits of thinking, but had also an undaunted and masculine spirit, which encouraged her to declare her thoughts without reserve. Her sentiments, however, in some respects, are too much at variance with those which have been generally adopted; and, although we may probably be ranked with the votaries of the old system, whose dark minds the rays of the new philosophy have never been able to penetrate, we are not afraid to express our opinion that the doctrines upon which she has principally insisted are unfriendly to human happiness, and, if practically followed, would injure the sex they were intended to vindicate and protect. It is not therefore without disgust that we

have read these 'Memoirs,' and some of the posthumous pieces, because we are convinced that they are not calculated to do honour to her memory although this may have been the sincere intention of the writer and editor.

. . . We shall probably . . . differ very much from the writer of these 'Memoirs,' in mentioning the conduct and principles of Mrs. Godwin, as far as the sexual intercourse is concerned, rather as a warning than a pattern.

. . . An account of her last illness closes these 'Memoirs,' which are written with neatness and sometimes with elegance of style, and with an affectionate regard for the lost object. . . .

The Monthly Magazine, July 1798 (5 : 493, 4).

The death of a woman, renowned for talent and eccentricity, has been succeeded by an interesting narrative of her life. In the vigour of age, and in the bloom of beauty, Providence has summoned away Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin. Her widower has published the *Memoirs* and *Posthumous Works* of this contested character; the former are somewhat meagre, perhaps, but they are written with much simplicity, and, we have no doubt, with truth; every objectionable circumstance of her life is narrated in the same ungarnished language which is employed in the enumeration of her many meritorious actions. It is not for us to vindicate Mary Godwin from the charge of multiplied immorality, which is brought against her by the candid as well as the censorious; by the sagacious as well as the superficial observer: her character, in our estimation, is far from being entitled to unqualified praise; she had many transcendent virtues. But she is now dead, and we shall

> No farther seek her merits to disclose,
> Or draw her frailties from the dread abode;
> There they alike in trembling hope repose,
> The bosom of her Father and her God!

The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine, July 1798 (1 : 94-102).

. . . We coincide with him [Godwin] in his opinion of the *utility* of a life of Mrs. Wollstonecroft (*sic*) ; though for a very different reason. Intended by him for a beacon, it serves for a buoy ; if it does not shew what it is wise to pursue, it manifests what it is wise to avoid.

. . . Finding herself superior to many of those ladies with whom she was acquainted, she fancied that she who was merely a woman of lively, but neither strong nor profound genius, was a phœnomenon of nature, born to give a new direction to human opinion and conduct.

. . . Her literary career was begun in the Analytical Review ; a performance in which, it seems, learning and sound reasoning were not then esteemed indispensibly necessary any more than they are at the present time.

. . . Mary's Reply (to Burke), as might be expected from a writer handling a subject and a work so much beyond her ability, was superficial and extravagant . . . trite . . . visionary . . . Next succeeded her *Rights of Woman*, which the superficial imagined to be profound and the profound knew to be superficial : it indeed had little title to the character of ingenuity. Her doctrines are almost all corollaries from the theorems of Paine.

. . . Though kind to her relations, and indeed, disposed to benevolence to the utmost of her power, hurried on by her feelings, she was much less beneficent than if these had been under the control of reason and sound principles. Her constituton, as the philosopher, her husband, bears testimony, was very amorous. Her passions were further inflamed ' by the state of celibacy and restraint in which she had hitherto lived, and to which the rules of society *condemn* an unmarried woman.' The amorous lady

fell in love with Fuseli, a married man, and continued long to have a violent affection for him: to what length it was indulged in has not appeared. At the close of the year 1792 she went over to France, then on the eve of war with her country . . . a still stronger motive than admiration of the political justice which France exhibited, prolonged her stay in that free and happy land. 'She entered' (says Godwin) 'into that species of connection for which her heart secretly panted. . . .' The state to which he attributes such beneficial consequences to the mind of her whom he afterwards made his wife, was *concubinage*. She became the concubine of Mr. Imlay, an American. . . .

The biographer does not mention many of her amours. Indeed it was unnecessary. . . .

Among other advantages which this just woman planned for her amour, was a trip to America, where she might have eluded her creditors. As the gallants of kept mistresses cannot have that confidence, which is one of the strongest motives to constancy, Mary was forsaken by her paramour. . . .

> [The reviewer proceeds to pollute by suggestion Mary's attachment to Godwin, and even attacks the reviewers who furnished the reviews of *Memoirs* and *Posthumous Works* to the March *Analytical*. As an instance of the length to which hatred of Mary Wollstonecraft could go, it may be mentioned that in the Index to this volume, under the name 'Wollstonecraft,' is to be found this reference: '*see* Helen Maria Williams, Godwin, Prostitution.' Looking up the last word, one actually reads: 'Prostitution, *see* Mary Wollstonecraft.']

The British Critic, September 1798 (12: 228-33).

To such persons as are capable of unbiased reflection this performance, extraordinary as it is, may prove

instructive. Of the authorship of the tale no doubt can be entertained, for, as the author was the husband of the heroine, he had access to the best information, of which he appears to have assiduously availed himself. . . .

. . . Both Mrs. Wollstonecraft and her biographer spent much of their time in labouring to eradicate from the minds of their readers all respect for establishments deemed venerable for their antiquity, and to inspire them with enthusiastic admiration of daring and untried theories in morals, in politics, and in religion. . . . We have an opportunity of contemplating the effects of such theories on their own practice. . . .

. . . Her biographer is vehement in his praise of her qualifications for the training of youth, and mentions, with exultation, ' the salutary effects of a new system of education ' which she introduced into this noble family. One at least of these effects, we will venture to say, is fresh in the memory of our readers. . . .

The reader of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, will perhaps be surprised when he is informed, that, during her last illness, no religious expressions escaped the author's lips. In that work, the grand principle is, that woman is not the inferior of man, walking along with him in the road of duty, in which ' they both trained for a state of endless improvement.' The biographer of Mary affirms, that she had made greater progress than her neighbours. Her hopes therefore should have been better founded. Prospect of success in a great and favourite pursuit, usually animates the heart, and shows itself ; but alas ! if this narrative be correct, she, whom the author calls the greatest ornament to her sex, gave no signal of that hope ; ' she died and made no sign.' She had long discontinued her attendance on public worship ; she preferred the faint glimmerings of a false philosophy to the glorious light of the gospel ; and she could not be animated with those hopes, which the gospel alone can excite.

The Monthly Review, November 1798 (27 : 321-4).

Vulgar tears fall and evaporate without leaving any trace behind them : but the tear of affection is often chrystallised by the power of genius, and converted into a permanent literary brilliant. Mr. Godwin, whose abilities are indisputable, endeavours thus to dignify and render illustrious his sorrows for the loss of his wife ; we therefore regret the necessity of observing that not only the general reader, but the most judicious and reflecting part of mankind, will arraign the prudence and the utility of these memoirs, though he himself commences them with this sentence of high expectation : ' there are not many individuals, etc.'

After an exordium so splendid, we could not expect to find such a narrative ;—a narrative which we must indeed read with pity and concern, but which we should have advised the author to bury in oblivion. Blushes would suffuse the cheeks of most husbands, if they were *forced* to relate those anecdotes of their wives which Mr. Godwin voluntarily proclaims to the world. Virtue and vice are weighed by him in a balance of his own. He neither looks to marriage with respect, nor to suicide with horror. He relates with complacency of Mary Wollstonecraft, afterward his wife, that she cultivated a platonic affection for Mr. Fuseli, the painter ;—that she cohabited with Mr. Imlay as his wife, took his name, and had a child by him, without being married ; and that she even lived with Mr. G. himself, and was pregnant by him ; and that it was only her pregnancy which induced them to think of marriage ; fearing that, otherwise, she might be excluded from society. He gravely records, also (what was mentioned at the time in the newspapers, and was considered by some persons as calumny,) her attempt to drown herself in the Thames in consequence of the ill-treatment which she experienced from Mr. Imlay.

How the public welfare and improvement are connected with or can be advanced by the studied and uniform eulogium of such conduct will not be easily perceived. . . .

The New Annual Register for the Year 1798, p. 271.

The 'Memoirs of the Author of &c.' by William Godwin, are a singular tribute of respect to the memory of a well beloved wife. The subject of them was a woman of undoubted talents and genius, and possessed of many excellent qualities. For the praise which he bestows upon the former, notwithstanding that it may be thought exaggerated, and for the sensibility with which he speaks of the latter, we find no difficulty in accounting. But she was one who, unhappily for herself, seems never to have had those good principles instilled into her mind, which would have enabled her to controul and govern her passions; and who, under the influence of a warm constitution, and warm imagination, formed to herself ideas of female delicacy, and the intercourse between the sexes, in direct variance with those generally adopted by the world, and incompatible in the opinion of all old-fashioned moralists, with the order and well-being of society. Upon these notions she acted in life: and her husband has thought proper to present the public with a picture of her love adventures, and of some other extraordinary circumstances, which were whispered concerning her while living, but which the good natured part of mankind were willing to resolve into scandal and calumny. This appears to us a very extraordinary method of doing justice to her memory. And we should be sorry, could we suppose the moral taste of the world to be so vitiated, as that these Memoirs would be much read without exciting lively emotions of disgust and concern.

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